

MEDIA RELEASE

NSW Budget 2021-22 welcomed, but community mental health needs more

Tuesday 22 June 2021: The NSW Budget delivered welcome new funding for mental health today, but still more investment is needed for people to access psychosocial mental health supports across the state.

Mental Health Coordinating Council CEO Carmel Tebbutt says initiatives in the 2021-2022 NSW Budget will help address many issues, and particularly welcomes the inclusion of:

- \$109 million over four years for 25 **Safeguards Child and Adolescent Mental Health Response Teams** across the state
- \$36.4 million over four years for 57 **mental health Response and Recovery Specialists** across rural and regional NSW
- \$25.8 million over four years to continue the **Police Ambulance and Clinical Early Response model**, which embeds mental health clinicians with first responders
- \$3 million towards the establishment of **ACON's LGBTQ+ health centre** to improve access to primary and community-based healthcare
- An additional \$94 million for **domestic violence support** to prevent survivors of domestic violence and their children being forced from their homes
- Expanding the **Together Home Program** for rough sleepers with funding for a further 250 wraparound service packages and 100 new homes.

The NSW Budget has been developed against the backdrop of ongoing discussions between State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments about a new national Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement.

The Productivity Commission made clear the implementation of a national agreement, a key recommendation in its recent Mental Health Inquiry, will require additional funding from both State and Commonwealth Governments. This is particularly needed to address the estimated 46,000 people in NSW who would benefit from psychosocial support services but are not currently receiving them.

MHCC was hoping to see additional funding allocated in the NSW Budget for a national mental health agreement, in particular funding to support an expansion in psychosocial supports delivered by the not-for-profit community sector.

Ms Tebbutt says MHCC will work with the NSW Government to ensure funding for a national agreement, including for psychosocial support services.

Nationally only 12.7% of the total mental health budget is spent on mental health services provided by community not-for-profit organisations, according to the most recent Productivity Commission Report on Government Services.

NSW has one of the lowest levels of spending on mental health services delivered by not-for-profit community organisations in the country, at just 7.35% of its total mental health budget.

“We welcome the new initiatives and commitment to ongoing programs in the NSW Budget but we will continue to advocate for increased investment in psychosocial support services to help maximise recovery for people living with enduring mental health conditions,” Ms Tebbutt says.

“People with lived experience of mental health need support for their recovery, they need help to find or keep a job, maintain a stable home, and create meaningful connection to their community.”

For real and meaningful structural change to assist overall mental health recovery, the community mental health sector has called for funding for these services:

- **600 new Step-Up Step-Down places:** short-term ‘homelike’ residential centres where people experiencing severe mental health illness can transition out of hospital or avoid a hospital admission when in crisis. **Costed at \$88 million per year.**
- **5,000 additional community living support places** for people to live in their homes with support. **\$180 million per year.**
- **Mental Health Hubs** to provide coordinated care.

For media queries or to request an interview with Carmel Tebbutt, contact Lara Cole on lara.c@mhcc.org.au or 0421 202 643