

## MEDIA RELEASE

### NSW Budget 2022 – 2023 mental health initiatives welcomed but misses step change investment

**Tuesday 21 June:** Mental Health Coordinating Council welcomes initiatives announced in the 2022 – 2023 NSW Budget that improve access to services and enhance the NSW mental health system.

Key announcements by the NSW Government include:

- **\$143 million** over four years for the Towards Zero Suicides initiative
- **\$60 million** for universal aftercare services following a suicide attempt or suicidal crisis
- **\$46 million** for headspace centres for young people
- **\$26 million** over four years to establish adult Head to Health hubs.

Many of these mental health initiatives were included in the bilateral agreement signed in March as part of the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement between the Commonwealth and NSW Governments.

Mental Health Coordinating Council CEO Carmel Tebbutt welcomes the investment, in particular funding for the continuation of the Towards Zero Suicides initiative and investment to establish more adult Head to Health treatment hubs in the state.

“These programs will make a difference in many people’s lives,” said Ms Tebbutt. “Where the Budget falls short is in recognising the urgent need for significant systemic change to address identified gaps in psychosocial support services.”

Psychosocial supports delivered largely by non-government organisations play a crucial role in supporting people living with severe mental health conditions to recover and live well.

“Spending on services delivered by these community-based mental health organisations is still low, at less than 10 per cent of the total mental health budget in NSW.

“We know that if we want to stop people escalating into a mental health crisis, we need to frontload support and rehabilitation so people can get support and services when and where it is needed.

**“Report after report into our mental health system has shown that to prevent people needing crisis intervention, we require increased investment in a greater number of services provided in the community by non-government organisations with a strong local presence.**

The \$700 million state-wide Mental Health Infrastructure program has been allocated \$73 million in the 2022-2023 Budget.

“While we welcome the continued rollout of mental health infrastructure, this program has yet to realise the commitment made in 2018 to ‘enhance step-up step-down capacity in the community’, a critical program that would have a significant systemic impact,” Ms Tebbutt said.

Step-up, step-down services are short-term ‘homelike’ residential centres where people can transition out of hospital or avoid a hospital admission when in crisis.

These services are widely operated in other states, cost half that of keeping someone in a mental health hospital bed and, it is estimated, would benefit 9,500 people in NSW each year.

“We need 13 new ‘Step-up-Step-down’ services to establish a state-wide program where people experiencing severe mental health crisis can transition out of hospital or go to and avoid a hospital admission,” Ms Tebbutt said.

To help fill the gap in psychosocial services, NSW also needs 5,000 additional housing and accommodation support packages for people living with a severe mental health condition.

**Mental Health Coordinating Council welcomes the \$3,000 health worker bonus in recognition of work on the frontline during the pandemic and calls for this payment to be extended to workers in the non-government health sector who equally went to extraordinary lengths to continue critical supports to people during the pandemic.**

**For media queries or to request an interview with Carmel Tebbutt, contact Lara Cole at [lara.c@mhcc.org.au](mailto:lara.c@mhcc.org.au) or call 0421 202 643**