

CONCLUSION

Shifting the Balance: Investment priorities for mental health in NSW acknowledges the significant strides, accelerated by COVID-19, NSW has made towards better awareness of mental health and increased investment in mental health supports and services around the state.

This has no doubt improved the lives and wellbeing of many people living with mental health conditions, along with their families and friends, and contributed to a stronger, more compassionate society.

What the *Shifting the Balance* report has identified are the gaps and challenges still remaining in the state. The report highlights where the system fails to match up with community need. It reveals that many people in NSW cannot access the specialist supports they need, or if services do exist, are not readily available in local communities or tailored to specific needs.

These gaps urgently require our concerted attention and investment to ensure everyone with a mental health condition in NSW is supported. The challenge for policymakers is to make sure all people can access the care they need, in their own communities, no matter how complex or individual their mental health condition.

Shifting the Balance identifies the priorities for investment which will improve outcomes for people living with mental health conditions across NSW. The report demonstrates the need to scale up the number of psychosocial support packages by a further 10,000 for people living with long term and severe mental health conditions, it makes the case for 10 new targeted, face-to-face services and supports for young people with high support needs and to bolster the five already

operating, and it calls for access to 130 additional Step Up Step Down places so more people have access when they are becoming unwell or are transitioning out of hospital.

Solutions exist already, and are working successfully in the community, driven by community-managed mental health organisations. These solutions are not only beneficial for individual outcomes but represent significant opportunities to maximise the dollar spend in mental health. To encompass all people in NSW and build broad-based a strong mental health system these community-based supports need to be expanded and accelerated as a priority. We need to shift the balance towards community-based solutions, supports and services.

None of this can be achieved without a committed and skilled workforce supported to do demanding, but essential, work. The community sector's mental health workforce deserves a greater focus and tangible investment to build and sustain it today and in readiness for the challenges to come.

All of this is even more paramount when we look to the future and consider that nearly two million people in NSW will be living with a mental health condition by 2041.

We urge decision makers to consider the recommendations made in this report and work with community-managed organisations and Mental Health Coordinating Council to see them implemented.

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