

## MEDIA RELEASE



### **NSW Government's response to Mental Health Inquiry recommendations needs a commitment to investment now**

**Thursday 5 September 2024:** Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC) acknowledges the NSW Government's support for 24 of 39 recommendations from the Portfolio Committee's Inquiry Report on 'Equity, accessibility and appropriate delivery of outpatient and community mental health care in New South Wales', however, we are disappointed to note no new significant investment or commitments to address the critical and increasing gap in mental health services for people living with mental health challenges and psychosocial disability.

Of the 39 Inquiry recommendations, 24 are supported without any significant additional funding, and whilst 8 are supported in principle and 7 noted, there is no commitment to actions moving forward.

We urgently call on the NSW Government to develop a clear and meaningful plan to address the Inquiry's recommendations that address the collective priorities identified across several state and national reviews. Key actions include:

- Increasing and maintaining funding across the entire mental health system with priority investment in community-managed mental health services.
- Increasing funding cycles across the sector to five years, to support the growth and sustainability of the workforce and improve continuity of care.
- Expansion of the Safe Haven program.
- Meaningful investment and expansion of supported living services such as the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI), HASI Plus, and Pathways to Community Living Initiative programs.

The recommendations highlighted in the Inquiry demonstrate strong alignment with a number of priorities MHCC had emphasised in its submission for widespread investment in mental health and psychosocial services and programs, and a workforce that could appropriately meet both existing and future needs.

The recommendations gave hope to the possibility of ensuring sustainable transitions, access, and equity across the service system into the future, and better lives for individuals, their families and carers. The Government's response represents a lost opportunity to meet long overdue reform of the service system.

The NSW Government has acknowledged some areas of need with commitments to previously announced initiatives in their 2024-25 Budget allocations, but have failed to support recommendations to increase and maintain sustainable funding across the mental

health system. Nevertheless, MHCC is encouraged to see consideration of introducing five-year funding agreements for NSW Mental Health Community Living Programs to support greater stability of the workforce, however a concrete commitment to the workforce remains unclear.

MHCC CEO Dr Evelyne Tadros says, “We look forward to the NSW Government now investing to deliver the meaningful change absolutely necessary to ensure equity and access to mental health services, particularly for the community-managed services sector. Without new initiatives or sufficient funding, the community mental health system will continue to struggle under the weight of increasing demand and limited resources. The time to act is now, if we are to meet the growing needs of our community”.

MHCC remains committed to advocating for meaningful change that improves access, equity, and sustainability for our members and the community mental health sector.

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**About:** Mental Health Coordinating Council is the peak body for community-managed mental health organisations in NSW and is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). MHCC provides policy leadership, promotes legislative reform and systemic change, and develops resources and training to assist community mental health organisations to deliver quality and effective services underpinned by best practice principles. Visit [www.mhcc.org.au](http://www.mhcc.org.au)