

Significant mental health wins, but will it be enough to bridge the gap?

There is much to commend in the 2017-18 State Budget, especially in terms of its commitment to family violence and protecting women and children.

For people living with mental illness, their families and carers, there are a number of important funding initiatives. However, VICSERV is concerned that it won't be enough to address the **looming gap in Victoria's mental health service system**, as a significant proportion of the Mental Health Community Support Services (MHCSS) funding is transferred to the NDIS over the next two years.

'VICSERV estimates that as many as **10,000 Victorians living with mental illness** will be unable to access an appropriate service in the NDIS environment. We welcome the investments identified in the budget, especially in forensic services, and to meet the demand on clinical services, but we are still concerned that it may not be enough to provide the support people need now, in Barwon, and in the recent NDIS roll out areas,' said VICSERV CEO, Angus Clelland.

In response to what it sees as 'our most urgent needs' the Andrews Government has announced a record investment of \$325.7 million in mental health services. This funding includes:

- \$201.1m for an additional 579 inpatient services and approximately 75,000 hours of community care to meet demand on clinical services;
- \$85.2m for expansion of forensic mental health services, with an additional 6,750 Mental Health Court Liaison Services per year;
- expansion of the Assessment and Referral Court (ARC) List;
- provision of mental health supports for after-hours bail hearings;
- six community forensic mental health programs (CFMHP) to expand treatment for offenders on a Community Corrections Order;
- Specialist mental health education for Victoria Police to improve police capability to manage incidents involving people with a mental illness;
- \$8.4m for Aboriginal-controlled health services to provide mental health support;
- Continued prevention and early detection of perinatal depression; and
- \$8.3m for a Grampians Prevention and Recovery Care (PARC) service, and \$10 mil for Facilities Renewal Grants for mental health and drug and alcohol facilities.

'In our pre-budget submission VICSERV called on the Victorian Government to provide more effective responses to people with mental illness in the justice system and prisons' said Mr Clelland.

'We know that **people with mental illness are over-represented at every stage of the criminal justice system**, and the allocations to forensic mental health services will go some way to reducing this area of high need.

'We are also pleased to see the additional funds for community care aimed at addressing the demand on clinical services. We are very keen to talk to the Government about how this initiative will be implemented and to work with them to achieve the best possible outcomes for the significant numbers of people living with serious mental illness, and their families and carers who will not have their needs met by the NDIS,' he said.

'Continuation of funding to support the transition to NDIS is also very welcome. With the exception of the trial site in Barwon, **people with mental illness who are currently accessing support services have only recently started to move into the NDIS**. There is still a great deal of work to be done as the Scheme is implemented and developed throughout Victoria over the next 2-5 years; and as the impact on people with mental illness, their families and carers is monitored.'

Key measures to support people with mental illness during the NDIS implementation period include:

- Further funding to support of consumers and carers, and providers as NDIS is rolled out across the State; and
- Funding to expand support for delivery of Victoria's NDIS Workforce Strategy, including the development of options for a registration and accreditation scheme

More information is available on the VICSERV website, www.vicserv.org.au.

Visit the VICSERV website to sign up to our **e-bulletins** to keep abreast of developments in mental health in Victoria and nationally.

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