

12 November 2020

Beyond Blue welcomes Victorian Government's investment in mental health

Beyond Blue today welcomed the Victorian Government's pledge of \$868.6 million towards a suite of mental health initiatives, including those that will make suicide aftercare available to more Victorians and pave the way for more services designed by people who live with mental illness.

As part of its upcoming State Budget, Victoria will fund measures including more early intervention supports for young people, additional mental health beds, training for more mental health workers, more culturally appropriate supports for First Nations peoples and services for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government has also dedicated \$21.4 million towards the further expansion of its Hospital Outreach Post-Suicidal Engagement (HOPE) program, which supports those in suicidal crisis.

Beyond Blue's Way Back Support Service is among the suicide aftercare services operating under the HOPE initiative. The Way Back provides one-on-one support for people as they rebuild their lives after a suicide attempt. It has supported more than 6,000 people around Australia since it commenced in 2014.

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman commended the Victorian Government for following through and implementing the interim recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, and said she looked forward to seeing the Royal Commission's final report in February.

"These are significant investments, and many arise from the Royal Commission," she said.

"We know the past few months have been difficult for people in Victoria so it's heartening to see the Victorian Government responding to community needs with such rigour and purpose," she said.

Ms Harman welcomed moves to feature the perspectives of those who live with mental health issues in the new Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing, and the \$8.7 million investment in residential mental health services designed and delivered by people with lived experience.

"The people who often understand mental illness best are those who live with it, so it's absolutely vital their voices are front and centre in any discussion about how the system is strengthened and remade," Ms Harman said.

She said Beyond Blue would continue pushing for sweeping changes to Australia's mental health and suicide prevention systems.

"Beyond Blue has long advocated for nationwide mental health system reform and, with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear the nation needs this now more than ever," Ms Harman said.

"We will continue to work with governments, people with lived experience, mental health professionals and our partners in the mental health and suicide prevention sectors to ensure Australians receive supports that match their needs.

"For some, that will mean clinical interventions, for others that will mean low-intensity mental health coaching, self-guided digital mental health supports or peer support, or a combination of all of these.

"The time for reform is now."

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The Beyond Blue Support Service is available via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via beyondblue.org.au/get-support for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST or email responses within 24 hours).

The new Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Service is available 24/7 at coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au. Its dedicated phone line, staffed by mental health professionals briefed on the pandemic response, is now open on 1800 512 348.