

Tuesday, 11 May, 2021

Beyond Blue welcomes largest ever mental health investment by a Commonwealth Government

Beyond Blue has welcomed the Commonwealth's \$2.3 billion investment in mental health and suicide prevention initiatives announced in the 2021 Federal Budget.

The package is an important first step towards the reform the community desperately needs, and includes important initiatives that focus on prevention and early intervention, aftercare support for people who have attempted suicide, and children's mental health.

Beyond Blue Chair The Hon Julia Gillard AC said: "Beyond Blue welcomes the Federal Government's commitment to mental health and suicide prevention reform in this budget.

"The universal aftercare package is a significant investment that, subject to state and territory co-investment, will provide crucial support to everybody who is discharged from hospital after a suicide attempt. This is something Beyond Blue and many others have advocated for over many years.

"We encourage the Commonwealth, states and territories to collaborate on the long-term investment and integrated system, measurement and workforce plans required to bring about true structural reform. The new National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, expected in November, will be critical."

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said it was encouraging to see record funding for mental health and suicide prevention.

"This is a substantial down payment to begin to build a mental health system for all," Ms Harman said.

"Beyond Blue looks forward to delving deeper into the detail of the budget over the coming days and to working with all governments, the sector, partners and people with a lived experience of depression, anxiety and suicide whose insights will be fundamental to the governance, decisions, design, management, evaluation and implementation of reforms.

Other funding highlights welcomed by Beyond Blue include:

- \$31.2 million to pilot a national Distress Intervention program and to develop accreditation and standards for safe spaces
- \$46.6 million for parenting programs
- \$79 million to implement key initiatives under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy
- \$3.1 million to boost the peer support workforce and offer up to 390 peer work scholarships
- \$117.2 million for a national database focusing on service delivery, performance and outcomes.

Ms Harman also thanked the Federal Government for extending Beyond Blue's core funding for four years.

"We are extremely thankful for the certainty provided by the Government's commitment to support our core work through to 2025, which means we can plan ahead with greater confidence in serving the community," Ms Harman said.

ENDS

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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.