

THURSDAY, 20 MAY, 2021

Beyond Blue welcomes Victorian Government's commitment to rebuild Victoria's mental health system

Beyond Blue has welcomed the Victorian Government's significant investment to continue implementing all recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

The Government's \$3.8 billion package, announced in today's Victorian Budget 2021/22, includes funding to fill gaps and lay down the foundations for genuine mental health system reform. The package includes new community-based services, support for children's mental health, prevention and early intervention and the expansion of suicide prevention strategies.

Beyond Blue Chair The Hon Julia Gillard AC said: "This is the start of transformational change and a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a system for everyone".

"As an organisation with national reach, Beyond Blue hopes the Victorian Budget encourages all governments to collaborate with each other, the sector and community in building an integrated system that puts people first, eliminates duplication, embeds the measurement of outcomes and ensures a sustainable and diverse workforce is available.

"The finalisation of a new National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement by state, territory and Commonwealth governments in November has never been more important."

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said the package demonstrates the Victorian Government's commitment to working with communities to rebuild a mental health system for all.

"The budget's focus on expanding and diversifying the mental health workforce and embedding people with lived experience into every level of the system is incredibly important. You can't build a system without people," Ms Harman said.

"A new system shaped by new thinking and the people who know how it works for them and where it can be improved will be crucial to its success.

"We look forward to working with the Victorian Government and exploring the finer details of the Budget in coming days."

Other Victorian Budget mental health and suicide prevention highlights include:

- Support for promotion, prevention and early intervention including \$218 million for mental health and wellbeing support for students in primary and secondary schools
- \$196 million for dedicated supports aimed at new parents and children aged 0 to 11
- \$264 million to establish 20 new adult mental health and wellbeing community services for people with mild to moderate mental health conditions, reaching them before they require acute care
- \$954 million to establish 22 community mental health and wellbeing services for people with more complex needs
- \$206 million to build the mental health workforce and embedding people with lived experience into the system through new training programs, ongoing education and career pathways

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- \$71.2 million to strengthen the system through initiatives including a mental health and wellbeing outcomes framework and a new Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission.
- State-wide implementation of the HOPE program, focused on aftercare suicide prevention, including four new HOPE sites for children and youth.

Ms Harman said integration with Commonwealth initiatives will be critical to the success of system reform.

“We need to see an end to silos where each government does its own thing. We need the states, territories and Commonwealth governments to come together and implement reforms that work for communities, that bring together different workforces and eliminate duplication,” Ms Harman said.

“There is great intent and record funding from the Commonwealth and Victorian governments, and we need to focus on these reforms being implemented in the right way so that everyone benefits from an integrated, easy-to-use system.”

Ms Harman also thanked the Victorian Government for extending Beyond Blue’s core funding.

“We are very grateful for the certainty provided by the Victorian Government’s ongoing contribution to our core work in prevention, early intervention and accessible support services for Victorians.”

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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.