



MEDIA RELEASE

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The 2022 Federal Budget misses the mark for people with severe and complex mental illness

The Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA) is disappointed that people with severe and complex mental illness have been let down once again by the 2022 Federal Budget.

Whilst the investment of \$658 million in mental health and suicide prevention is welcome, the Federal Budget does not allocate any new funding for services that will directly support people with severe and complex mental illness, some of our most vulnerable Australians.

Over 150,000 people with severe and complex mental illness still do not have support in the community to enable them to live well and independently (known as psychosocial support).

“After closing psychiatric institutions in the 1980s, we are still waiting for governments to provide additional funding that can support people with severe and complex mental illness forty years on,” said MIFA’s National Chief Executive Officer, Mr Tony Stevenson.

“This unfinished business of the closure of psychiatric institutions has condemned thousands of people to social isolation, risk of homelessness, poor mental and physical health, and reduced life expectancy.

“We are very disappointed that the Federal Budget fails to invest any new funding in community-based psychosocial support services for people with severe and complex mental illness.

“This Federal Budget is a step backwards at a time when we need to do more for Australians living with severe and complex mental illness. The Federal Budget completely misses the mark for these Australians.”

Investing in psychosocial supports for Australians with severe and complex mental illness is critical to supporting mental health and wellbeing. MIFA is advocating for the development and delivery of a national program of psychosocial supports to ensure people can access the supports they need, when they need them, in their local community.

“With the right psychosocial support, people with serious and complex mental illness can recover their place in their community, and live contributing lives, but we need new investments in psychosocial services to make this happen,” stressed Mr Stevenson.

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This new national program will require all governments to commit to a national psychosocial support program, delivered locally, that invests in services delivered by community mental health organisations to meet the level of demand that is currently not being met.

“After many years of advocating for more longer-term investments in psychosocial supports, funding for existing Commonwealth-funded psychosocial support programs will end on 30 June 2023 and there was nothing in this Federal Budget to support an extension of these programs beyond that date.

“This leaves thousands of vulnerable people in limbo, with no continuity of services guaranteed after June 2023, and service providers having to let good people go with no guaranteed continuation of funding.”

Unfortunately, the National Plan for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (‘the Plan’) and subsequent bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories are also short on solutions for people with severe and complex mental illness.

“The Plan does not include existing funding arrangements for psychosocial supports at the Commonwealth or State and Territory levels.

“It merely agrees to a one-to-two-year plan to further investigate the need for psychosocial supports.

“This does nothing to support the 150,000 plus people with severe and complex mental illness who are missing out on essential mental health supports now, which could make a real difference to their quality of life,” says Mr Stevenson.

“It is clear that much more needs to be done and we are seeking to work with governments to offer practical and timely solutions to stop the neglect of these Australians.”

“We are calling on all governments to work together to prioritise new funding for a national program for psychosocial supports to enable mental health recovery in the community for every Australian living with severe and complex mental illness, so people can get the support they need to live better lives now.”

Ends

To get help 24/7, phone Lifeline on 13 11 14 or the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467. If you or someone you know are in immediate danger, phone 000 for emergency services.

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