



**Mental Health
Australia**

2022 Federal Budget Summary 2022 Federal Budget Summary

29 March 2022

Overview

In the 2021 Federal Budget, the Australian Government provided a welcome investment of \$2.3 billion acknowledging this was but the first instalment required to address the recommendations of the once in a generation Inquiry into Mental Health completed by the Productivity Commission in 2020. While the 2022 Federal Budget provides a welcome investment in mental health of \$658 million that will enhance the current mental health system, it is not investment on the scale required to sustain momentum for mental health reform. Workforce investments ignore the community non-government services sector and there is no additional funding for psychosocial services.

Let's not forget, the Productivity Commission Inquiry told us that the cost to the Australian economy of mental illness and suicide is estimated to be about \$70 billion per year. It estimated addressing its priority recommendations would cost \$2.4 billion per year and implementing all recommendations would cost between \$3.5 and 4.2 billion per year. In the context of the current cost to the Australian economy of mental illness, this size of investment seems like a drop in the ocean.

In addition, mental health investments in the 2022 Federal Budget appear to be made in the absence of a national vision for the person-led, community focussed mental health system multiple inquiries have called for. The recently released National Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, while establishing an excellent set of principles, fails to follow through with actionable and accountable steps to achieve their realisation.

Despite the absence of a cohesive national vision or the appropriate level of investment, there are still some very welcome measures in the 2022 Federal Budget.

The increased funding of services supporting schools in their support of children, expanded services for young people and additional support for women escaping family violence and trauma are important. As is improving access to mental health, suicide prevention, and social and emotional wellbeing services for indigenous and CALD communities.

The workforce initiatives are a start but fall well short of addressing the chronic workforce shortages faced in the sector and there aren't any focussed on the community non-government sector but rather on clinical workforces. This is a major gap. There is no additional funding for psychosocial services.

The suicide prevention investments will not be sufficient to make a significant impact upon suicide rates in line with Mental Health Australia's campaign to reduce suicides by 25%. These are just a few initial insights of the 2022 Budget.

Outlined below is a summary of mental health related measures – taken directly from **Budget Papers 2 and 3** and Portfolio Budget Statements.

Mental Health Specific Measures

“Prioritising Mental Health” – National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan measures

The Australian Government is providing \$547.0 million over 5 years from 2021-22 to for Stage 2 reforms under the [National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan](#). Measures are outlined according to the 5 pillars of this Plan below (Budget Paper 2, pp78-81). Partial funding for some of these measures had previously been provided.

Prevention and Early Intervention

- Lifeline - \$52.3 million over 4 years from 2022-23
- Mental health and wellbeing in schools - \$9.7 million over 3 years from 2022-23 for a national measure of student wellbeing, national guidelines for the accreditation of mental health and wellbeing programs and trauma informed professional development support for teachers
- Mentoring program - \$3.3 million over 2 years from 2021-22 for mental health mentoring program for ‘at risk’ Year 8 students at public secondary schools
- Research - \$3.9 million over 3 years from 2022-23 for “innovative, evidence based mental health and suicide prevention research activities”
- Mental health literacy app - \$1.8 million over 2 years from 2022-23 for app to assist Australian parents and carers to identify the signs of social or emotional problems in children
- Continuing youth mental health services on Mornington Peninsula - \$1.6 million over 4 years from 2022-23

Suicide prevention

- Extending regional suicide prevention initiatives - \$42.7 million over 2 years from 2022-23
- Suicide prevention research - \$4.0 million over 2 years from 2022-23

Mental health treatment initiatives

- Young Australians with severe mental illness – \$206.5 million over 3 years from 2022-23 for “continued access to services”
- Eating disorder pilot program - \$24.3 million over 4 years from 2022-23 “to identify innovative and evidence-based models of care to best address the needs of people with eating disorders and to continue funding current eating disorder services for 2022-23”
- Case conferencing - \$15.1 million over 4 years from 2022-23 “to introduce a case conferencing item on the Medicare Benefits Schedule to support eligible patients to access coordinated, multidisciplinary mental health care”
- Headspace - \$14.8 million over 5 years from 2021-22 to continue a range of programs including flying headspace, the Digital Work and Study Service, and schools suicide prevention activities
- Head-to-help clinics - \$13.6 million over 2 years from 2021-22 “to continue funding for the Victorian head-to-help clinics until February 2023 and extend NSW pop-up clinics until December 2022”



- COVID-19 support - \$11.3 million in 2022-23 to “continue to provide COVID-19 support through digital mental health services”

Supporting vulnerable Australians

- Multicultural communities - \$17.8 million over 2 years from 2022-23 “to provide mental health support to multicultural communities across Australia, including further funding for the Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma and to provide access to translating and interpreting services for people accessing mental health services”
- Closing the Gap targets - \$8.6 million over 3 years from 2022-23 “to establish the National Closing the Gap Policy Partnership on Social and Emotional Wellbeing to advise on policy and implementation of actions to address social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention closing the gap targets”
- Red Dust program - \$8.5 million over 3 years from 2022-23 “to extend culturally appropriate programs in 16 communities across the Northern Territory, focused on social and emotional wellbeing, sexual health, relationships, alcohol and other drugs, and Foetal Spectrum Disorder”
- National Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Centre - \$8.3 million in 2021-22 to establish this centre, as the national hub of expertise in treatment for trauma-related mental health conditions
- Support for people affected by 2019-20 bushfires - \$0.9 million in 2021-22 to extend Medicare Benefits Schedule items
- Mental health supports for the Devonport community following the tragedy at Hillcrest Primary School - \$0.8 million over 2 years from 2021-22

Workforce and governance

- Mental health workforce strategy first stages implementation - \$64.7 million over 5 years from 2021-22
 - increasing psychiatry workforce - \$28.6 million over 3 years from 2023-24 to for training posts, funding for supervisors and rural and remote initiatives
 - national mental health ‘pathways to practice’ program for nursing, allied health and psychology students - \$18.3 million over 3 years from 2022-23
 - “supporting the mental health of health workers” - \$6.2 million over 3 years from 2021-22
 - providing general practitioners with access to psychiatrist support – \$4.7 million over 3 years from 2022-23
 - building capacity of mental health workers to respond to people with both substance use and mental health conditions – \$1.3 million over 2 years from 2023-24
 - stigma reduction program for secondary and tertiary students to promote careers in mental health - \$0.4 million over 2 years from 2022-23
- Headspace employment of General Practitioners in rural and remote areas - \$4.2 million over 5 years from 2021-22
- Australian Public Service Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Unit - \$3.5 million over 4 years from 2022-23 to implement and maintain mental health framework for public servants



National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement

The Australian Government recently released the National Agreement on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. The Australian Government states the Agreement “sets out the shared intention of the Australian Government and state and territory governments to work in partnership to improve the mental health of all Australians and ensure the sustainability and enhance the services of the Australian mental health and suicide prevention system.” Under the National Agreement, the Australian Government has signed Bilateral Agreements with New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

The Bilateral Agreements set out the full funding commitments from the Australian Government and States and Territories, which includes payments to the states as well as payments to the Department of Health and Primary Health Networks. Budget Paper 3 reports specifically on payments from the Australian Government to these three states under the bilateral agreements: New South Wales (\$27.3 million over five years), South Australia (\$8.7 million over four years) and the Northern Territory (\$2.6 million over four years) (Budget Paper 3, p26).

Adult mental health centres

The Australian Government is providing \$12 million over three years from 2021-22 to establish an adult mental health centre in South Australia. This has previously been announced (Budget Paper 3, p23).

Emergency Department improvements

Under the “Achieving better health outcomes measure” the Australian Government is providing \$1 million over 2 years to improve emergency department facilities for vulnerable patients and those with mental health issues, and help children with high medical needs and their families to spend less time in hospital (Budget Paper 3, p23).

Support for Veterans and their Wellbeing

The Government will provide \$165.0 million over 4 years from 2022-23 to support veterans and improve wellbeing support services for veterans and their families. This includes funding for the Family Support Package, an extension of the Psychiatric Assistance Dog Program, community-level projects through the Veteran Wellbeing Grants Program, Australian Kookaburra kids, Invictus Australia, financial counselling and other measures.

Flood Package

The Australian Government is providing support for recovery from the recent floods in New South Wales and Queensland, including

- \$31.2 million over 2 years from 2021-22 “to meet the increased demand and support for the mental health of residents in flood affected areas” (Budget Paper 2, p31)
- \$10.0 million over 4 years from 2022-23 “to support the mental health of school-aged children in the Northern Rivers region affected by the recent flood event” (Budget Paper 2, p32)



Mental health support for first responders involved in natural disasters

The Australian Government is providing \$10 million over 2 years from 2021-22 for a national program to provide psychological support, wellbeing activities and training in maintaining mental health for first responders involved in natural disaster settings (Budget Paper 2, p159).

Alcohol and other drugs

The Australian Government is providing \$31.6 million over 4 years from 2022-23 to extend 19 drug and alcohol projects under the National Ice Action Strategy, and \$19.6 million over 4 years from 2022-23 (with \$4.9 million per year ongoing) to roll out a national take home naloxone program (Budget Paper 2, p75).

The Australian Government will provide \$9.2 million in 2022-23 to continue funding for programs run by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation, Daybreak program, and the SMART Recovery online platform (Budget Paper 2, p76).

Maternal health bereavement support

The Australian Government is providing \$5.1 million over 4 years from 2022-23 to establish a new grant program for stillbirth and miscarriage support services including bereavement support, as well as \$4.2 million over 4 years from 2022-23 for the continuation of the Hospital to Home program providing targeted support to assist grieving families (Budget Paper 2, p85).

Ageing and Aged Care

Among other measures, the Australian Government is providing \$22.1 million over 3 years from 2022-23 to establish a fund and for State and Territory Government proposals to trial new models of multidisciplinary outreach care for residents in residential aged care facilities (Budget Paper 2, p56).

The Australian Government is also providing \$22.9 million (in total) over three years to NSW, VIC, QLD, WA, SA and ACT for a program which will deliver intensive, specialised care for people with very severe behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (Budget Paper 3, 28).

Telehealth

The Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan commits to making “universal telehealth a permanent fixture of the Australian health system”. This reports a commitment made in the 2021-22 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan, p6 and Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, pp12, 241, 247).



Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Safety Net threshold reduction

The Australian Government is reducing the PBS Safety Net thresholds. This means patients will reach the Safety Net sooner each year. People with concessions will pay for approximately 12 fewer scripts before reaching the threshold (after which they pay no cost), and people without concessions will pay for approximately 2 fewer scripts before reaching the threshold (after which they pay a concessional rate). An estimated 2.4 million will benefit from this change, with Government allocating \$525.3 million over 4 years from 2022-23. The new Safety Net thresholds will take effect from 1 July 2022 (Budget Paper 2, p75).

Rural and remote health

The Australian Government is providing \$33.3 million over 4 years from 2022-23 to the Royal Flying Doctor Service to support emergency aeromedical services as part of establishing a new 10 year agreement (Budget Paper 2, p68).

Measures related to the social determinants of mental health

Women's safety

The Australian Government will provide \$1.3bn over 6 years from 2021-22 towards initiatives to reduce family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) against women and children, and address “the full life cycle of violence across prevention, early intervention, response and recovery” (Budget Paper 2, p37. These measures are the first phase of the Commonwealth's contribution to the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032), and include:

- \$222.6 million over 6 years to strengthen initiatives to prevent gendered violence
- \$328.2 million over 5 years to extend and establish FDSV early intervention and prevention programs, including trauma-informed national counselling services to support victim-survivors
- \$480.1 million over 6 years to fund programs to support women and their children who are experiencing FDSV, including extending the Escaping Violence Payment and Safe Places program
- \$290.9 million over 5 years to extend and expand programs that support the recovery of FDSV victim survivors, including pilot of a new model of care through Primary Health Networks and trial specialised and trauma informed legal services.

Strong and Resilient Communities Grants – expansion

The Government will provide \$45.1 million over 4 years from 2021-22 to expand the Strong and Resilient Communities grant program to support around 120 additional local community-driven projects to increase the social and economic participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged people. Funding for this measure has already been provided for by the Government (Budget Paper 2, p168).



Building the Long-Term Viability of the Financial Counselling Sector

The Government will provide \$10.5 million over 4 years from 2021-22 to develop a voluntary industry funding model which will help meet the shortfall in general financial counselling services, including \$1.5 million in seed funding to establish a new not-for-profit body to implement the scheme (Budget Paper 2, p166).

