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Federal Budget invites states to close critical gaps in mental health

The 2017-18 Federal Budget has been welcomed by Mental Health Australia, as it starts to address one of mental health's most critical issues – gaps in psychosocial support services.

Tonight, Treasurer Scott Morrison's Budget speech identified \$173 million to be invested in Australia's mental health, including "\$80 million to assist people with severe mental illness resulting in psychosocial disability who are not eligible for the NDIS."

"\$80 million from the Commonwealth Government, to be matched by investments from state and territories, will help ensure some 280,000 Australians with severe mental illness can access the community based psychosocial support services they need," said Mental Health Australia CEO, Frank Quinlan.

Access to these services has been uncertain since governments agreed to wind down a range of mental health programs to fund the much-needed NDIS.

"Minister Hunt has listened to the concerns of those at the front line, and this investment of \$80 million over four years will mean we can start to close these growing gaps."

"Ensuring people with mental illness have the right services at the right time is a national priority which requires the collaboration of all governments. Our attention will focus on states and territories, who are now invited to match the Commonwealth investment. This is an opportunity for us to bolster investment in community based mental health services, and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties."

"This sends a welcome signal that the Commonwealth Government recognises the value of investment in mental health. It also highlights the importance of governments working together to meet the needs of people with mental illness, their carers and families."

Mental Health Australia also welcomed other measures in the Budget. These include:

- Mental health treatment for current and former members of the Australian Defence Force – expanded access - \$33.5 million
- Improving telehealth for psychosocial services in regional areas - \$9.1 million
- Suicide prevention and support programs in hotspots (locations where suicide repeatedly occurs) and funding for small infrastructure projects - \$11.1 million
- Support for mental health research - \$15 million

Media Contact: Lachlan Searle – 0488 076 088

