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MEDIA RELEASE

Frilly mental health – real reform missing in this budget!

The Government called this a 'no frills' Budget – but despite the increased expenditure in health care, mental health has been relegated to a very thin line of lace on the periphery of a substantive new investment mostly into hospital services.

The 2010-11 Federal Budget has delivered on the funding commitments promised for mental health through the CoAG Health Reform agreement, but the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) is disappointed that there is little else in the way of real reform or investment in mental health.

“Mental health and dental health were the only disease specific areas that the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission thought warranted their own chapters in their final report. 10% of all the health reform recommendations related specifically to mental health. Although the Government has now supported all these recommendations, there is limited funding and no implementation plan,” said CEO David Crosbie.

“Mental health is a special case in any attempt to build a better health system for Australia’s future. State and federal governments have underinvested in mental health for decades and now we are all paying a huge price for this.

“The Mental Health Council welcomes any additional funding into mental health care, however, we need more than new money into old systems. If we don’t invest at the community level in new services then the real costs of failure will be higher expenditure through our hospitals, our prisons and our homeless shelters.

“We are disappointed that, yet again, the Federal Government has missed an opportunity to make a substantial difference in the lives of the thousands of people experiencing mental health disorders who are currently not able to access the services they need to maintain their jobs, their family, their health and well being.

“Mental health consumers and carers would be rightly dissatisfied with this Budget. It falls a long way short of supporting desperately needed mental health reform.

“Nicola Roxon has indicated that mental health is ‘unfinished business’ and that the Federal Government is keen to take a bigger role, particularly in community mental health. We look forward to positively engaging with the Government as they progress their stated agenda for mental health reform,” Mr Crosbie said.

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