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MEDIA RELEASE

Government wrong – this is not a good budget for mental health

The Rudd Government today claimed that this is a “good budget for mental health”.

The Government is wrong. There is no significant increase in funding for mental health.

The millions of Australians who are currently struggling to get mental health services are fed up and frustrated with Government platitudes and vague commitments.

The Prime Minister commented on 3AW yesterday: “I accept fully that when it comes to mental health there is much, much more work to be done...”

The PM previously said: “We face a serious problem of rising mental illness in our community ... 65% of people who need mental health care go untreated.”

Mr Rudd also asked “Why is it that mental health problems are so often picked up by our police and AOD workers and not our health services? This is the problem today but will become a greater problem in the future.”

These are good questions Mr Rudd!

Mr Rudd promised to put mental health firmly back on the CoAG agenda, but CoAG did not deliver real mental health reform.

Asserting that the Rudd Government has doubled funding for mental health is also misleading.

Many of the initiatives currently being funded were created under the Howard Government. The Rudd Government has provided precious little in terms of new services and new initiatives to help those at risk and in need.

Kevin Rudd says the buck stops with him, so he must explain why mental health has received so little funding in successive budgets, why it will be late 2011 before CoAG revisits the crisis in mental health; and what real commitments he is prepared to make to address mental health?

Tomorrow is a long way away when the biggest challenge in your life is trying to keep a loved one safe and the police are the only service you can get a response from.

The reality of mental health system failure cannot be postponed. There are workable solutions on the table now, why not support them?

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