

# Australian Government Mental Health Funding

## Significant Australian Government programs or initiatives and the funding allocated to these programs

- The Australian Government is committed to improving the mental health system in Australia. During 2004-05, the Australian Government's expenditure on mental health services was approximately \$1.370 billion (Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services 2007).
- On 5 April 2006, the Prime Minister made the single biggest investment in mental health by any government in Australia's history, allocating approximately \$1.9 billion over five years for a package of services for people with a mental illness, their families and carers.
- This package builds on existing measures and provides a range of activities that are designed to work together in a complementary way to significantly improve mental health outcomes.
- The Australian Government's package is being jointly implemented by the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA), the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).
- DoHA is the lead agency for the delivery of the Australian Government's package, with responsibility for implementing 13 of the 18 initiatives over the next five years, including:
  - \$507 million to increase access to psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, GPs and other allied health professionals through reforms to the MBS.
  - \$191.6 million to assist psychiatry and general practice to engage mental health nurses who can provide coordinated treatment and care for people with serious mental illness.
  - \$72.3 million to place more workers, such as nurses, psychologists, social workers, OTs and Aboriginal health workers, in rural and remote areas – with \$20.6 million of this total to target areas that are drought declared.\*
  - \$130 million for a range of initiatives to increase the mental health workforce through additional education places, scholarships, clinical training, and specific activities to increase the capacity of health workers in Indigenous communities.
  - \$73.9 million to improve the capacity of drug and alcohol services to better meet the needs of people with both mental health and alcohol and drug issues.
  - \$62.4 million to expand national and community-based suicide prevention programs.
  - \$46 million to provide 7,000 additional places in structured programs that encourage social participation and reconnect people with severe mental illness back into community activities.
  - \$56.9 million to expand telephone counselling services and provide new web-based counselling services.
  - \$28.1 million to provide early intervention services for parents, children and young people.
  - \$21.6 million for a national campaign to increase awareness of the links between drug use and mental illness. This will be rolled out early next year.
  - \$10.1 million to provide crisis counselling services for distressed individuals in drought-declared rural areas, as well as education and training for clinicians and community leaders.\*

- \*The 2007 Federal Budget reallocated a total of \$30.7 million from the Better Access initiative to improve the delivery of mental health support and services to drought-affected rural and remote communities. Of this, \$20.6 million over four years will expand the existing Mental Health Services in Rural and Remote Areas initiative, and \$10.1 million will be delivered through the Mental Health Support for Drought-affected Communities initiative.

Additional measures under this package that are being implemented by other agencies include:

- \$103.5 million for additional education places, scholarships and clinical training in mental health, this includes the provision of an additional 420 mental health nursing places and 200 post-graduate psychology places each year, as well as 25 full-time and 50 part-time post-graduate scholarships to nurses and psychologists. This initiative is being jointly implemented by DoHA and DEST.
  - \$284.8 million to engage 900 personal helpers and mentors to assist people with a mental illness who are living in the community to better manage their daily activities. This initiative is being implemented by the FaCSIA.
  - \$45.2 million in funding for community-based projects that aim to support families, children and young people affected by mental illness, this initiative is being implemented by FaCSIA.
  - \$224.7 million to provide approximately 650 new respite care places to help families and carers of people with a mental illness or an intellectual disability. This initiative is being implemented by FaCSIA.
  - \$59.5 million to help young people who are experiencing a mental health problem to stay in education, this initiative, in conjunction with the Connections program, will assist an estimated 6,000 young people who are experiencing mental health issues. This is being implemented by DEST.
  - \$39.8 million to provide 2,500 additional places in the Personal Support Programme to help people with a mental illness enter and remain in employment. This is being implemented by DEWR.
- These new activities complement and strengthen a range of existing programs that the Department has been managing, including:
    - \$57.1 million since 2000 to *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* to support intervention and improve services for people with depression;
    - \$69 million over five years from 2005 to establish the Youth Mental Health Initiative that assists young people with mental health and associated drug and alcohol problems; and
    - around \$263 million from 2001 to 2009 to provide the Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care program that supports general practitioners to assist their patients with mental health problems. Under this program, GPs provide psychological interventions and engage with allied health professionals to better support patients. The Better Outcomes program has seen great success since its inception in 2002 with 100% of Divisions of General Practice currently funded to run ATAPS and more than 73,000 patients referred for over 310,000 sessions.
  - In addition to this comprehensive range of programs being delivered, the Government also provides \$331 million to states and territories through the Australian Health Care Agreements (2003-2008) to improve the delivery of mental health services.