



### Mental Health Council Responds to State Budget

The Mental Council of Tasmania [MHCT] welcomes the measures in yesterday's budget that specifically relate to improving the mental health system for Tasmanians. The State Government has announced \$3 million over three years to support the implementation of a number of priority actions under the Government's Rethink Mental Health Plan 2015-2025.

This is a timely and welcome outcome as initially the plan had no additional funds allocated to it so this will be a helpful boost that will no doubt benefit Tasmanian's access and experiences when utilising mental health services. It has been over 6 months since the release of the Rethink Mental Health plan so it is pleasing to see an investment that will ensure we have better outcomes for Tasmanians.

The State Government has indicated that the funding will go towards assisting the following initiatives:

- Establishing a peer workforce in public mental health services to improve experiences for people accessing the mental health system.
- Supporting primary health and in particular GPs to be the front end of mental health care and to support people in the community.
- Implementing the Safe Wards model in public mental health services to improve the quality and safety of services

MHCT is pleased to see some constructive steps toward developing an integrated mental health system, however, there are still some significant priority areas that need to be addressed. For example, initiatives that increase mental health awareness and reduce stigma have yet to be acknowledged in this current budget.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis has indicated that, "We need to ensure there is a focus toward prevention and early intervention initiatives that will enable people to know where and how they need to seek support for all of their mental health needs."

"We are pleased to see that community mental health services have not been completely overlooked in this budget. Particularly in regards to the increased funding to Rural Alive and Well to support our dairy farmers that was announced earlier in the week."

"Since the release of Rethink Mental health and now the new suicide prevention strategies back in March, there should be a real sense of optimism within our community that we are going to see improvements across the board for Tasmanians who need to access mental health services."

"This budget is the next step in the right direction to begin to alleviate those concerns and reassure Tasmanians that the plans for reform are going to deliver on what has been promised - improved access and quality of mental health services for those in need."

"What is missing from the budget is more detail. Rethink and the Suicide Prevention strategies are comprehensive plans that will need further investment moving forward," said Ms Digolis.

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