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Mental Health Council of Tasmania Media Release

Strategy needed to address mental health workforce shortages

Following Thursday's State Budget announcement, the Mental Health Council of Tasmania (MHCT) has welcomed the Government's continued investment in the mental health and wellbeing of Tasmanians, but warns that more needs to be done to address workforce shortages across the state's mental health sector.

As part of their submission to this budget, MHCT recommended dedicated resourcing to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of an upskilled and responsive workforce that meets the mental health needs of all Tasmanians, regardless of whether they live in urban, rural or remote areas of the state.

"While we welcome the initiatives announced today, we are concerned that many of them will be unachievable unless we can address the existing workforce challenges that we're seeing right across the mental health sector," said MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis.

"We are already hearing from our members of their struggle to recruit and retain qualified mental health workers needed to meet demand. So while these new initiatives announced today, as well as those recently announced as part of the bilateral agreement are great, they won't mean anything if we don't have the skilled workforce to deliver them."

MHCT's proposal recommends the appointment of a Community Mental Health Workforce Coordinator to implement an integrated workforce strategy involving community, public, primary, and private mental health service providers across the state.

In addition, MHCT has also called for a Mental Health Professional Development Fund, which would ensure the continuous improvement of a contemporary and responsive mental health workforce that meets the needs of Tasmanians.

MHCT CEO, Connie Digolis, said that a multi-faceted approach was needed to meet current and future workforce demands.

"Attracting people from outside of the state is one piece of the puzzle, though this presents a number of challenges given similar shortages of qualified mental health workers across the country. At the same time, we must also look at ways to upskill our current workforce, and attract new people from outside of the sector and ensure that there are a range of suitable training and professional development options available to them."

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Please include the following crisis support services for any story regarding mental health or suicide:

Lifeline: 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

beyondblue: 1300 22 4636 www.beyondblue.org.au

More information on safely reporting on mental illness or suicide can be found at:

<https://mindframe.org.au/> and <https://www.tascharter.org/>