

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW STATE BUDGET 2005-06 **Additional \$22 million for Mental Health**

NSW Health as a whole received an injection of \$901 million.

An overall increase of 9% on last year.

These additional funds are dedicated to frontline service enhancements and increasing costs of wages for health care professionals, medical technology and hospital treatment.

In **mental health** there is an additional \$71 million on last years spending bringing the total mental health budget to \$854 million.

\$22 million of the additional \$77 million is new money. The rest is funds rolling out from the enhancement of \$241 million over four years announced in 2004.

The new \$22 million has been dedicated to the expansion of Psychiatric Emergency Care (PEC) units and a range of community based mental health projects.

Currently there are PEC units at Liverpool and Nepean. These are to be retained and an additional seven units opened over 2005-06 including at St George, St Vincent's and Hornsby hospitals.

The community based mental health projects are targeted to community rehabilitation including an expansion of NGO services, services for older people, the establishment of specific services for adolescents in contact with the justice system and dual diagnosis and early intervention programs for 16 – 25 year olds.

'Figures on overall spending on 'Voluntary Organisations' working in mental health in this budget are actually down on the revised 2004 -05 figures. As yet there is little detail on exactly what the 'expanded NGO services' are, as referred to in the budget papers. Questions have been put to the department for clarification. We do know that there is (a previously announced) 8 million going towards further supported accommodation under the Housing and Supported Accommodation Initiative (HASI) which is proving to be a great program, stated Jenna Bateman Executive Officer of the Mental Health Coordinating Council.

On a program basis however, funding of community based mental health NGO services continue to substantially trail funding in other areas such as HIV/AIDS and Drug and Alcohol despite research that indicates mental illness is responsible for 13% of the total disease burden and 30% of the non-fatal disease burden (AIHW, 1999).

Mental Health overall in NSW is attracting around 7-8 % of the total health care budget and NGO community based care only 2-3% of the mental health budget. NSW should be spending more like 16% on mental health services and of this 20% should be funding community based care, if NSW is to develop a mental health system in keeping with international trends.

Whilst we are seeing some increases in the amount NSW spends on mental health the 2005-06 mental health budget continues to under spend on care in the community. The revolving door and readmission rates in mental health services will continue until the community sector is adequately resourced, stated Ms Bateman.

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*MHCC is the peak
Body for mental health
Organisations in NSW
Funded by NSW Health*

