

# Media Release

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*Working For  
Mental Health*

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## ***Premier acknowledges government neglect of people with mental illness and backs up comments with dollars***

"Social justice for those least advantaged in the community is not something we've heard a lot of from NSW political leaders in recent years. Acknowledgement and even apology for the poor record of neglect and marginalisation of people with mental illness in NSW was made by the Premier today in his speech to the National Press Club."

"In his address the Premier talked about the need for greater focus on social policy by government – which is refreshing in its own right – and he then went on to announce a package of funding for mental health services aimed at making a substantial difference to how people can get the help they need, when and where they need it. "

"85% of the new funding package of \$338 million was targeted at community mental health services with a focus on rehabilitation including vocational support. That the Premier commented it is both morally and practically right to provide support to help people stay in their own home gives hope that we will see more funding to a range of community based support programs. MHCC would like to see people have more access to social and recreation activities and given help to connect with a range of health and community support services. Stopping the isolation experienced by many people with mental illness and keeping them engaged with others so that any relapse can be caught early is very important."

"The stumbling block to rollout of today's announcement is workforce – at all levels in the mental health sector attracting and retaining staff is a big issue. Without a skilled and committed workforce all good intentions will fail. This is also an issue for the NGO sector which requires infrastructure in this area to be built. A caring and skilled workforce must be a priority."

"However, attracting and retaining staff in a priority social policy area is easier than in a neglected and marginalised one - so we will hopefully see a natural increase in response to the better profile of mental health in addition to the initiatives such as nursing scholarships announced today."

### **For further comment contact:**

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*MHCC is the peak  
Body for mental health  
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