



NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH
CONSUMER ALLIANCE

Federal Budget Analysis

The National Mental Health Consumer Alliance – the national consumer peak body for people with lived experience of mental health challenges– welcomes the funding for some foundational supports in the 2025 budget. However, we are disappointed with the lack of new funding for mental health initiatives that would increase access to supports and potentially save lives.

Priscilla Brice, CEO of the NMHCA, stated, “We are disappointed that further funding was not forthcoming in the 2025 Federal Budget for mental health reform. The voice of people with lived experience of mental health challenges is vital to influencing policies and projects that directly impact them and will be diminished because of this decision.”

The budget allocated \$364.5 million to provide general disability supports for people with a disability, but there is still no roadmap for foundational supports. From our initial reading of the budget papers, **there is no additional funding for specific psychosocial supports for people outside of the NDIS.**

There has been a couple of general health budget announcements that may be beneficial for all Australians. The reduction in price for pharmaceuticals through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), as well as an incentive scheme for General Practitioners (GPs) to bulk bill most of their patients, may assist in reducing the costs faced by mental health consumers. However, **the number of Medicare-subsidised psychology and psychiatry appointments available, and the rebate available for these appointments, have not changed.**

The NMHCA notes that it is unlikely that any of these announcements will be implemented prior to the election as it takes some time for the required legislation to be drafted and passed by both the House of Representatives (lower house) and the Senate (upper house). Some of the announcements have been marked with a statement “if re-elected, Labor will...”.

Australian Treasurer, the Hon Jim Chalmers, said the focus of this year’s budget is: “Helping with the cost of living – strengthening Medicare, building more homes, investing in every stage of education – and making our economy stronger, more productive and more resilient.”

NMHCA has requested more detail from Department on the budget specifics relating to our key asks, mental health and psychosocial supports. If made available, we will send an additional communique to consumers with full update.



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What we asked for :

National Mental Health Consumer Register- *Unclear*

The NMHCA is currently unclear about whether it has successfully secured funding for the development and operation of a national mental health consumer register.

The register would assist the NMHCA to support all Australian government agencies to continue and improve their engagement with mental health consumers through running focus groups, consultations and co-design sessions. The NMHCA plans to take a whole of government (social determinants) approach by promoting the register to all relevant government agencies beyond the Department of Health and Aged Care to ensure services are co-designed with mental health consumers.

Lived Experience Digital Library - *Unclear*

The National Mental Health Consumer Alliance, along with Mental Health Carers Australia, continues to wait for an announcement about funding for the development and maintenance of a digital library of lived experience resources. This library will enable the sharing of resources for the mental health sector to learn from lived experience expertise.

Chief Consumer Role - *Unclear*

To ensure the perspective of people with lived experience of mental health challenges are represented at the most senior levels of the Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC), the NMHCA sought funding for a Chief Mental Health Consumer to join the other Chief roles including Chief Psychiatrist, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, and Chief Health Economist. The proposed role should be tasked with ensuring a consumer voice within the Department and focus on reform towards a human rights model. The Chief Mental Health Consumer would ensure that a consumer lens is considered at a high level when critical decisions about mental healthcare are made by the Australian Government.



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Other announcements that could directly affect mental health care

Some people with lived experience of mental health challenges could benefit from the following announcements, which may or may not survive the election.

NDIS foundational support measures

The Government is investing \$423.8 million to support people with disability. This includes \$364.5 million to provide general supports for people with disability and their families, carers and kin. These supports will complement additional foundational supports to be co-funded with states and territories. We could not find evidence of specific funding for psychosocial support in the NDIS.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), which oversees the NDIS including the management of support packages, will be funded to replace consultants and contractors with public servants. An additional \$175.4 million will also be spent on enhancing the NDIA's fraud detection systems.

NMHCA welcomes measures to improve the NDIS. However, the NMHCA needs more specific information on the proposed fraud detection system and who it will be targeting. We are wary about the use of technology to prevent fraud in light of the Robodebt fiasco.

First Nations

The Government is investing \$506.4 million to support better outcomes for First Nations Australians and close the gap. This includes \$24.7 million over four years from 2025–26 to improve access to culturally safe and qualified mental health support including scholarships for up to 150 First Nations psychology students to boost the First Nations health care workforce.

National Autism Strategy

The Government has announced \$17.1million to deliver the strategy. We welcome this announcement and note that many autistic people also experience mental health challenges.

Digital Mental Health



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Some people with lived experience of mental health challenges could benefit from the following announcements, which may or may not survive the election.

Digital Mental Health

The Government has announced additional funding of \$46.0 million over four years from 2024–25 to continue digital mental health services. Funding will be provided directly to nationally available services, which are free or low-cost and do not require a referral.

The NMHCA acknowledges that many mental health consumers are either unable to, or choose not to, make use of digital mental health services. The NMHCA does not want to see digital mental health services to be funded at the detriment of in person services and supports.

Domestic and Family Violence

Should Labor win the election \$21.4 million has been announced over the next three years to improve victim and survivor engagement in the justice system. The next financial year will see \$2.5 million provided to the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program providing emergency accommodation for women and children and an additional \$200,000 to extend funding for complex case management and provide wrap around support services for victim-survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence.

Supporting Australian Communities Affected by the Israel-Gaza War

The Government has announced \$1.6 million over two years from 2025–26 to provide mental health supports and services for Australians impacted by the conflict in the Middle East.

Disaster Support

The Government has announced \$3.2 million (2025–26) to extend targeted mental health support for emergency service workers.

Schools

More mental health support for schools was announced but no further information is available regarding this measure.



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Broad health announcements that could positively impact mental health consumers

Generally, mental health consumers could benefit from the following broad health announcements.

PBS Script price reduction

The Government has announced that all PBS scripts will cost \$25 or less if Labor is re-elected, with concession card holders still paying \$7 with the thresholds remaining the same. This may assist in reducing the costs faced by mental health consumers for their mental health specific medication. However, pharmaceutical medications do not assist all mental health consumers. Many people use Medicare-subsidised psychology and psychiatry appointments, and these costs have not changed. There is a risk that some people with lived experience of mental health challenges will continue to utilise what is often the cheapest option for mental health challenges – pharmaceutical medications – when they may have been able to reduce or indeed stop taking the medication with other appropriate supports such as therapy.

The Coalition has committed to supporting this measure if it wins the election.

While welcoming this announcement in principle, Priscilla Brice, CEO of the NMHCA, stated that “The use of medication is just one part of mental health support and care. We’re calling for an increase in the number of Medicare-subsidised psychologist visits available through the Better Access Initiative and further funding into alternative mental health supports such as Safe Havens.”

MBS bulk billing incentive

The Government has announced an incentive for General Practitioners (GPs) to bulk bill all patients. The new bulk billing incentive will provide GPs with a direct incentive to bulk bill all of their patients. This is an extension of the current incentive scheme.

If your GP still chooses not to bulk bill, you will not notice any change and will continue to receive the same gap payment from Medicare.

The Coalition has committed to supporting this measure if it wins the election.



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Broad health announcements that could positively impact mental health consumers

Cost of Living

The Government announced \$150 will be provided to all 'householders' to go towards power bills this year. It also announced tax cuts that will not be implemented until next year, should Labor win government.

National Mental Health Commission

We were curious to read the following text in the budget papers. We are awaiting clarification, however we suspect that this may simply be acknowledging the change of circumstances for the Commission that was made last year.

*"...**abolishment** of the National Mental Health Commission, a non-corporate Commonwealth entity in the Health and Aged Care portfolio. The Department of Health and Aged Care, in the same portfolio, adopted the functions of the National Mental Health Commission."*

We have asked for more detail from the Department of Health and Aged Care and will report back if this is of concern to mental health consumers. The NMHCA has participated in a review of the National Mental Health Commission, and we are awaiting the outcome of that process.

For more mental health consumer news, analysis and updates from the National Mental Health Consumers Alliance



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