



**TASMANIAN LIBERAL SENATE TEAM
SENATOR THE HON. ERIC ABETZ | SENATOR DAVID BUSHBY
SENATOR THE HON. RICHARD COLBECK | SENATOR JONATHON DUNIAM**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Strengthening mental health services and job security in Tasmania

The Liberal National Government will provide a record \$1.45 billion for community mental health services and change the funding model to ensure security for both jobs and services.

The Tasmanian Liberal Senate Team welcomed the announcement and said the funding will be provided through the Government's innovative 31 Primary Health Networks (PHNs).

"PHNs were setup as independent regional health organisations to commission health services, including mental health, in response to the needs of local communities throughout Australia, including that of Tasmania," Senator Richard Colbeck said.

"The Tasmanian Primary Health Network is expected to receive \$41.9 million over a three period to help tailor services to meet the specific needs in our region and help deliver a stronger, more integrated mental health system.

"Mental health is becoming an increasing concern among the community and timely support can help minimise the harm done by conditions such as anxiety, depression and other illnesses.

"Young people, people in remote areas, and people in aged care will be significant beneficiaries of this major mental health package.

"As part of this record investment, Tasmania's indigenous community will also receive \$3.1 million over three years for targeted mental health services because we know indigenous Tasmanians have particular mental health complexities that need additional support.

"By delivering a strong economy and a Budget surplus the Liberal National Government has been able to increase investment in health and education to support the Tasmanian community."

It is estimated that one in five people in Australia experience a common mental disorder each year. Nearly half of the Australian population will experience mental illness at some point in their lives, but less than half will access treatment.

Minister for Health, Greg Hunt said PHNs coordinate local support for child and youth mental health, psychological therapy, severe and complex illness, community-based suicide prevention and Indigenous mental health.

"In 2017–18, about 200,000 Australians accessed over 900,000 mental health services through local providers commissioned by PHNs," said Minister Hunt.

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“The record three year \$1.45 billion funding commitment will commence from July this year until 2021-22 and is \$170 million more than what was provided for the previous three years.”

“It will continue to support important services such as headspace centres, psychological services for hard to reach groups, suicide prevention activities, mental health nurses and mental health support for older Australians.”

Included in the \$1.45 billion funding is:

- \$177 million for mental health nurses
- \$77 million for suicide prevention, including Indigenous suicide
- \$74 million for the mental health of those in residential aged care
- \$89 million for Indigenous mental health
- \$617 million for youth mental health, including headspace
- \$399 million for psychological therapies for hard to reach populations

Minister Hunt said the Government will also change the way that PHNs are funded to ensure that the staff and mental health professionals who deliver these critical services will no longer face uncertainty on short term contracts.

“This will allow longer term planning, provide job certainty for thousands of people employed in the sector, and deliver a stronger mental health system,” Minister Hunt said.

“The new funding process will dramatically improve their ability to ensure that services can be commissioned well in advance at any point in time, and provide greater funding certainty for the community-based mental health sector.”

“This will particularly benefit those living in rural and remote areas where staffing shortages, due to employment uncertainty, have historically reduced access to mental health services.”

“Our Government has an ongoing commitment to supporting the mental health of Australians,” Minister Hunt said.

The Liberal National Government has prioritised better mental health for all Australians with \$4.7 billion expected to be spent on mental health this financial year.

The Government’s strong economic management ensures continued investment of record funding into vital health initiatives including mental health, life-saving medicines, Medicare and hospitals.

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