



Prioritising Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (Pillar 1) – Prevention and early intervention

In response to the Productivity Commission and the National Suicide Prevention Adviser's reports, the Australian Government will invest \$248.6 million into prevention, resilience and early intervention as part of a record \$2.3 billion whole-of-government mental health and suicide prevention package.

Investment will go towards key initiatives such as:

- \$111.2 million to create a world-class digital mental health service system. This includes:
 - \$11.6 million to commence the transformation of the existing Head to Health gateway into a comprehensive national mental health platform. This will provide Australians with greater choice and access to high quality, free and low cost digital mental health services and treatment
 - \$77.3 million to provide support to existing digital mental health services, including to manage the continuing increased demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2019–20 summer bushfires
 - \$13.1 million to support ReachOut Australia to continue delivering free, high quality digital mental health services to young Australians aged 12–25, their parents, carers and schools, and
 - \$2.8 million to support the implementation of the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards to improve the quality of digital mental health service provision, and protect service users and their support people.
- \$47.4 million to support the mental health and wellbeing of new and expectant parents including to:
 - expand existing support services provided by Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia
 - provide continued funding to support digital perinatal mental health screening

- develop a perinatal mental health minimum data set to support the identification of gaps in screening and to support evidence-based investments in perinatal mental health services, and
- deliver universal perinatal mental health screening in conjunction with states and territories.
- \$6.3 million to increase specialised early intervention mental health support and suicide prevention services available to fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in, drive-out (DIDO) workers
- \$77.1 million for the National Legal Assistance Partnership to support early resolution of legal problems for those experiencing mental illness, and for mental health workers in Domestic Violence Units (DVU) and Health Justice Partnerships (HJP) to support women who have experienced family violence.
 - This will include increased mental health funding for the existing 21 DVUs and HJPs, with additional funding to 7 of these for regional and remote outreach activities.
- \$5.7 million to build on the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program to assist people with mental illness to participate in the workforce, and
- \$0.9 million to continue the Ahead for Business digital hub, supporting small business owners to take proactive, preventative and early steps to improve their mental health.

Why is this important?

One in 5 Australians experience mental health issues each year. Digital services, channels and infrastructure increase access to services for people with limited access to face-to-face services, including those in regional and remote areas. Digital services deliver low-cost prevention, early intervention, and treatment to large numbers of people.

The mental health of parents affects the social and emotional wellbeing of their children. Early detection of mental illness in the perinatal period, including the antenatal and postnatal periods, provides an opportunity to offer effective early intervention.

FIFO and DIDO workers have higher than average rates of anxiety and depression, experience higher rates of suicidal intent, and are more likely to have poor mental health. To ensure FIFO and DIDO workers are receiving tailored support, specialised services are required that recognise the impact long-distance commuting can have on mental health.

These investments are in response to the National Suicide Prevention Adviser's Final Advice (Recommendations 5 and 6) and the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health (Recommendations 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 19 and 21).

Who will benefit?

Enhancing the current Head to Health digital gateway to become a national mental health platform will make it easier for people to connect with appropriate mental health services, and support better connection, information sharing, and referrals between services. Digital mental

health services offer an effective alternative to higher-cost and high-intensity face-to-face services, particularly for people with common disorders of mild to moderate severity. Service accreditation against the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards will improve the quality of digital mental health service provision, and protect service users and their support people.

The enhancements to perinatal mental health services will ensure any risk to the mental health and wellbeing of the one in 5 women and one in 10 men who will experience anxiety and/or depression in the perinatal period will be detected and managed early. This is essential to giving the 300,000 babies born in Australia each year the best start to life.

Industries such as mining and construction have an estimated population of FIFO and DIDO workers of between 75,000 and 90,000. These workers, and those in other industries, will be encouraged to have early access to improved mental health services tailored to their needs.

How much will this cost?

The Australian Government will invest \$248.6 million over 4 years.