

29 March 2022

## **Budget 2022-2023: Response from the Australian Association of Psychologists(AAPi)**

**Please find below comments in relation to tonight's Federal Budget from the Executive Director of the [Australian Association of Psychologists](#), Tegan Carrison.**

"While the AAPi welcomes the overall commitment of \$6.8 billion towards mental health and suicide prevention, unfortunately this Budget only allows for an additional \$648.6 million in spending. For such a pivotal aspect of our community, this is nowhere near sufficient.

"We remain concerned about shocking workforce shortages and chronic underfunding of pivotal services such as Medicare, rural and remote services and school psychologists. Without raising the Medicare rebate to \$150 for the clients of all psychologists, access to affordable mental health care remains out of reach for hundreds of thousands of people. Simply extending and re-announcing previous investments, or shuffling the existing workforce around to community hubs and specialist centres, is not increasing access to mental health.

"If we are going to have a stronger, more resilient Australia, as referenced in tonight's budget, then we need to make decisions that are as big as the issues Australia's mental health faces.

We have a serious problem in that measures have been announced that don't fully address the elephant in the room: a workforce that is smaller than demand, limited access to psychologists, areas of psychology facing extinction, and insufficient rebates for the majority of Australians.

"Too much of this budget is a band-aid solution, and the stakes are too high for that. As a nation, our mental health has been collectively challenged like never before. The frustration of getting help when we really need it is wearing us thin and those providing the help are even more fed up. A survey\* of psychologists last year showed 78% of their clients exhibited more distress, anxiety, or depression, with 47% unable to take on new clients.

"This Budget did not address AAPi's key concerns with regards to workforce shortages and chronic underfunding of pivotal services such as Medicare, rural and remote services and school psychologists.

"It also completely ignores our association's Better Access request for a \$150 client rebate for all psychologists across the board which would have dramatically increased access to those needed mental health treatment today.

"While AAPi is happy to see that our calls for more investment and support of provisional psychologists through 75 internships for provisional psychologists, supporting the safe use of the provisional psychologist workforce to deliver services and the provision of 150 free

Psychology Board of Australia endorsed supervisor training sessions, the question remains whether this would lead to more early career psychologists achieving full registration.

"We look forward to working with the government on the AAPi recommendation of utilising and supporting the provisional psychology workforce to their full potential.

"We certainly welcome the news of continuation of item numbers for bushfire victims and the additional funding for mental health care of those impacted by the floods. Disaster support and recovery is absolutely vital.

"We are very pleased to see mental health support for vulnerable community members including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, multicultural communities and victims of domestic violence.

"AAPi also welcomes the much-needed investment in suicide prevention eating disorder treatment and services such as crisis lines but more is needed to ease the escalation of our mental health crisis and support our existing and future mental health workforce."