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\$1.5 billion towards mental health good but caution over welfare to work

"A \$1.5 billion commitment to the mental health sector is the type of investment we were looking for" says Dr Gerry Naughtin, Chief Executive of one of the country's largest non-government providers of community mental health services.

"We particularly welcome the balanced approach and applaud the substantial funding that will be committed to supporting people with the most significant mental health problems. We value the fact that there will be funding for co-ordination as well as flexible funding arrangements which can be tailored to individual need by organisations like Mind"

"The Government has made a productive investment towards meeting unmet demand for mental health services in our community and I am happy that mental health is a serious item on the Government's agenda", said Naughtin.

While increased funding for mental health services is positive, the sector is examining the welfare to work reforms more closely. Any reform to the current operation of the system will affect the benefits of some of the most vulnerable in our community.

"We need to examine the welfare to work reforms very carefully. We certainly welcome more training and reskilling opportunities and the specific support services which are proposed for people with mental illness, because work is one of the most fulfilling and beneficial activities for people recovering from mental illness", We also welcome the increase in hours that DSP recipients can work and remain on payment.", said Naughtin.

"Mind also believes that more than \$2 million will be required to improve the capacity of employment services to support employers to recruit and retain employees facing serious mental health challenges. We hope that the Government will closely monitor this allocation and expand it if the funding is effective as this would be a good public investment.

"What we don't want to see is the stripping away of benefits of people least able to afford it. Sensible measures need to be implemented as to who can or cannot possibly work, and hopefully the sector will sit down with government to thrash these out." Dr Naughtin said.

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About Mind Australia

Mind Australia is the largest non-government provider of mental health services in Victoria. Mind Australia has been operating in Victoria for more than 30 years and has more than 400 staff across Victoria and South Australia.

Mind Australia annually supports 4,500 through their personal experience of mental illness. Mind offers community based, tailored services for clients and their carers to help them to achieve their goals and manage their illness.

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