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MEDIA RELEASE

2011-12 BUDGET DELIVERS A MAJOR STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

The Gillard Government has delivered a Budget package that offers new hope to people affected by mental illness, their families and carers. This significant funding investment, and the development of a 10-year roadmap for mental health reform in Australia, are welcomed by the Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia (MIFA).

The Minister for Mental Health, Hon Mark Butler, has consulted widely with service providers, consumers and carers during the budget processes, which has been well received in the sector. The development of the Mental Health Commission should continue this consultative approach. "We believe there should be a source of frank and fearless advice to the Prime Minister, so we are very pleased to hear that an annual report card from the Commission will commence next year." Mr David Meldrum, Executive Director of the Fellowship said today.

The National Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories underpinned by \$200 million, will encourage rational developments across Australia that begin to make sense of the current complexities and inequities.

Mr Meldrum said "Increased funding for proven programs, including Personal Helpers and Mentors, Day to Day Living and Carer Respite is particularly welcome. We know these support a recovery journey that reduces social isolation, building pathways to clinical services, employment, housing, education and family support."



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MIFA appreciates the opportunities offered in the Budget to improve coordination of services for people with severe mental illness, but Mr Meldrum emphasised “the Government will need to work closely with the sector to get this right—we agree that many people can’t find the help they need when they need it, but no amount of coordination will fill gaps in services.”

MIFA welcomes other major initiatives, including increased accessibility to EPPIC and Headspace, where young people can get the help and advice they need to get their life back on track following mental illness.

“The bottom line is that this budget will allow thousands of Australians to access help where they can’t now, particularly those people and their families struggling with the effects of severe and persistent mental illness. Comprehensive mental health services are still a work in progress, but this has been a major step in the right direction.”