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Beyond Blue seeks genuine structural reform following Budget 2023/24

Beyond Blue has welcomed the Federal Government's commitment to meaningful change for Australia's mental health system following its initial \$586.9 million investment in the Budget.

Beyond Blue CEO Georgie Harman said the funding boost to Medicare and expansion of the mental health workforce would help improve access to mental health support as governments worked with the sector and community to initiate comprehensive, long-term structural reform.

"It's encouraging to see the Government moving to address Australia's mental health workforce crisis, and we note ongoing funding for psychosocial support for people managing severe mental illness," Ms Harman said.

"Of vital importance is the \$10.5 million to support the social and emotional wellbeing of First Nations Peoples in the lead up to this year's historic referendum."

Ms Harman said changes to bulk-billing and longer, more affordable GP visits could help more people access mental health support.

"This is a good start but what happens next is critical because more of the same won't do. We need to think differently if we are to meet Australia's mental health and wellbeing needs so it's encouraging to hear this government say this Budget lays the groundwork for further mental health system reform," Ms Harman said.

"Not only do we need a bigger mental health workforce, we need a diversified workforce that includes non-clinical options, such as coaching and peer support, so people can choose the support that suits them before they reach crisis point.

"Reform must be comprehensive and it must address the yawning system gap in low-intensity supports and services."

Ms Harman said Beyond Blue looked forward to collaborating with organisations across the mental health sector to create innovative digital solutions which, in combination with face-to-face supports, could make it easier for people to get the support that suited them.

"Right now in Australia, too many people are missing out on mental health support. Too many people are experiencing distress that earlier intervention could have eased."

Ms Harman said the cost-of-living relief measures in the Budget may help relieve some of the financial stress being felt across Australia, noting the significant role of social determinants in mental health.

"People are struggling to cover life's basics and that can have a detrimental impact on their mental health. As people tighten their belts, they are having to make a choice between paying for food and bills or getting ongoing mental health support," Ms Harman says.

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Beyond Blue Support Service: 1300 22 4636 or [beyondblue.org.au/getsupport](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport)

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