

4 January 2019

Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP
Treasurer
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email to: department@treasury.gov.au

Dear Treasurer

Re: Commonwealth Treasury 2019-20 Pre-Budget submission

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) is pleased to provide this submission to the Treasury regarding its priorities for the 2019–20 Budget. In developing this submission, the RANZCP consulted closely with Fellows and internal committees across the country to ensure that the priority areas identified reflect clinical experience, community input and mental health expertise.

The RANZCP is the principal organisation representing the medical speciality of psychiatry in Australia and New Zealand and is responsible for training, educating and representing psychiatrists on policy issues. The RANZCP represents more than 4000 qualified psychiatrists in Australia, many of whom have specific interest in ensuring people with mental health conditions have access to mental health services.

Mental illness accounts for 12.1% of Australia's total burden of disease, third highest behind cancer (19%) and cardiovascular diseases (15%). Despite this, only 7.7% of government health expenditure is dedicated to mental health-related services. This leaves significant unmet need within the Australian community. Furthermore, mental illness costs the economy due to work absenteeism and lost productivity, both for people living with mental illness and their carers. Improving our mental health system is therefore not only important for the health of Australians; it is an investment in our economy.

Acknowledging that the chronic underfunding of the mental health sector cannot be undone in a single budgetary cycle, the RANZCP recommends prioritisation of funding initiatives in 2019-20 under the following seven key topics:

- rural access and the psychiatric workforce,
- substance use and addiction
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health
- mental health needs of older people
- disability support and the NDIS

- mother and baby mental health
- suicide prevention.

Please see the attached submission which contains specific recommendations as to how mental health spending can be used to generate significant long-term benefits, both for the economy and for individuals, families and communities across Australia.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in the submission, please contact Bronwen Evans, RANZCP Stakeholder Relations Manager, via bronwen.evans@ranzcp.org or by phone on (03) 9601 4959.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kym Jenkins
President

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