The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) New South Wales Branch calls on the political parties contesting the upcoming NSW state election to put mental health at the centre of their plans.

By Dr Angelo Virgona – Chair, NSW Branch – Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

As New South Wales (NSW) prepares to go to the polls in March, the RANZCP NSW Branch and its members call on our major political parties to set out their vision for mental health in this state.

It is time to hear specifics from the political parties about what they plan to do if elected to government to address the vast and complex challenges facing our mental health system, and how they propose to provide better care and support to those people living with mental illness in this state.

In the lead up to this year’s state election, the RANZCP NSW Branch released its 2019 Pre-Budget Submission – Make Mental Health Count advocates for improved government investments in mental health in the order of $150 million per year or roughly 7% of the state’s current mental health budget. To put this amount into perspective, the government will be handing back $1 billion in gaming (poker) machine concessions to clubs this year and spending close to $2 billion on two new sporting stadiums in Sydney.

Specifically, the submission calls on the government to invest this money in services and programs targeting some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, including, but not limited to, mothers in the perinatal period with moderate to severe mental illness, children and young people, people with intellectual disabilities, people with addiction, people living in rural communities and people who come into contact with the justice system.

The scale and scope of the recommendations in the submission highlight the extent to which the current NSW mental health system is under-resourced and unable to meet the needs of the community. Put simply, it needs to work better, not just for people living with mental illness, but for people who work in it, from nurses, to allied health professionals, to psychiatrists.

We see too many people, too often, falling through the cracks and ending up where they shouldn’t, such as repeatedly presenting to emergency departments, or homeless or in prison.

Between now and election day, we’ll be calling on all sides of politics to lay out their vision to improve the mental health system. We challenge them to make mental health a top election priority, and to use the extraordinary budget position that NSW finds itself in to enhance the capacity and quality of our mental health services for the benefit of the whole NSW community.
We’re also calling on our members to contact their local MPs about the importance of the recommendations detailed in *Make Mental Health Count*, with a clear message that they intend to make their vote count for mental health in NSW.

Copies of RANZCP’s NSW Branch 2019 Pre-Budget Submission – *Make Mental Health Count* can be downloaded [here](#).

Enquiries: Ben Folino 9352 3604 [ben.folino@ranzcp.org](mailto:ben.folino@ranzcp.org)