The conditions are ripe for a new round of meaningful health reform, underpinned by stable and significant long-term funding to ensure the best possible mental health outcomes for NSW citizens.

The 2019 election and budget provide the Government and major political parties with the perfect opportunity to reveal their vision for the state’s mental health system.

This RANZCP NSW Branch’s Pre-Budget Submission sets out a range of policies where focussed attention by Government is required to advance priority areas in mental health care. We believe they are practical, achievable and affordable.

What’s needed?
Addressing the shortfall in NSW mental health funding compared to the burden of disease and making the system work better for everyone who works in it and needs mental health care

- Increase the mental health budget by $500 million annually so that it reflects the total burden of disease presented by mental illness; that is 13% of the total health budget (or $2.6 billion)
- Invest $30 million to ensure the Mental Health Access Line is able to provide timely, effective health triage, advice and referral for patients in crisis and users of this service (e.g. psychiatrists)
- Amend Health policy to enable sharing of patient records across Local Health Districts

Give our young people the best start in life

- Invest $86 million over 4 years to expand public acute and inpatient mental health services to ensure every young person with severe mental health conditions gets the care and treatment they need
- Invest $7.5 million over 4 years to provide appropriate care and support to people experiencing gender dysphoria

People with mental illness need safe and stable housing

- Invest $30 million annually to provide an additional 200 supported accommodation packages under the Housing Accommodation and Support Initiative program. This program supports mental health consumers to live well in the community.

Ensuring equality of mental health care for mothers and babies

- Invest $60 million over 4 years to establish three 8-bed Mother-Baby Unit (MBU) for mothers with moderate to severe mental health conditions living in the greater Sydney Metropolitan, Hunter-New England and Illawarra-Shoalhaven regions
- Invest $1.6 million annually to train nine perinatal and infant psychiatrists

Increase capacity and access to psychiatric care for people living in rural communities

- Invest $500,000 annually to employ a project officer to manage and provide program support for the delivery of a rural psychiatry training program
Reduce opioid misuse

• Invest $1.5 million annually to employ 15 project officers across the state to deliver smoking cessation program to people undergoing treatment for opioid addiction

• Invest $450,000 annually to employ three addiction psychiatrists (one stage 2, and two stage 3) in high need areas (Illawarra, Northern Rivers, and South Western Sydney)

More support is needed for older people with mental illness

• Invest $10.8 million over four years to employ clinical nurse specialists across NSW to enable increased access to mental health services for older people with a mental illness who are at risk of social isolation.

Give people with an intellectual disability the access and support they need to our public mental health care system

• Invest $19.6 million over 4 years to establish seven specialist multidisciplinary community based mental health teams dedicated to supporting people with an intellectual disability who have mental health conditions. The focus of the service will be to provide assessment and treatment as well as support mainstream services.

• Invest $10.8 million over 4 years to establish a network of specialised intellectual disability nurses (Clinical Nurse Consultants) across NSW to work with people with intellectual disability, their families, carers and clinical staff to plan and coordinate services and facilitate pathways for this client group through the public mental health system.

Ensure every child and adolescent has access to the best quality care in our public health system

• Invest $86 million over 4 years to establish 25 Child and Adolescent Acute Response Teams across our public mental health system to ensure that children and adolescents with severe mental health issues get the treatment, care and attention they need.

Forensic patients need access to quality health care and post-release support including proper psychiatric services and housing

• Invest $43.2 million over 4 years to increase bed capacity (by up to 60) for forensic patients and $12 million every 4 years for transitional housing to ensure their successful transition into the community if a new facility is to be built to enable such an expansion, then an additional appropriation of funds will be required.
Boost support for people with complex traumatic and personality disorders

- Invest $4.2 million over 4 years to retain the Westmead Psychotherapy Program to ensure local and state-wide service delivery for people with complex mental health conditions
- Invest $5.6 million over 4 years to establish a Complex Trauma and Psychotherapy Centre of Excellence at Westmead Hospital

Invest in state-wide specialised services

- Invest $3.9 million over 4 years expanding specialist neuropsychiatric services for people with complex clinical neuropsychiatric conditions and high level needs

Invest in clinical leadership

- Invest $100,000 annually to employ a project officer to administer a leadership mentoring program for consultants and senior registrars wanting to work in clinical director roles. The position would be located at the RANZCP NSW Branch.

Psychiatrists make a big difference to the care and support of people with a mental health condition.

Improving the level and quality of child and adolescent psychiatric and mental health services for young people has to be made a priority for government. A good start would be employing psychiatrists who are capable for working effectively with young people.

Chair Section of Youth Mental Health

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