

## **Baird Government response to BEING pre election submission**

On 15 December 2014 the Baird Government announced the *Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW*. As part of this, the Baird Government has committed to a once in a generation overhaul of mental health care service delivery with a \$115 million boost to mental health funding over three years to start these reforms. This is in addition to the record \$1.62 billion budget for mental health in 2014-15.

### Communities

The Baird Government is committed to building supportive and inclusive communities for people with a mental illness. As part of the *Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW*, the Baird Government will increase specialist mental health services in the community to ensure people with a mental illness are supported and receive continuing care.

Initiatives to increase supports in the community include:

- People with severe and complex mental illness will receive up to 15 per cent more hours of specialist clinical mental health support in the community
- Specialist perinatal and infant mental health will be enhanced to support 800 mothers with severe and complex mental illness to be cared for in the community with their children and families
- New community residential options will be designed to cater for people receiving long-term hospital mental health care to ensure they are able to live supported lives in the community

### Housing

The Baird Government is committed to helping people with mental illness find appropriate supported housing to enable them to live in the community. In the 2014-15 financial year alone, the Baird Government committed \$40.7 million for the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative to provide more than 1100 individual packages to ensure stable accommodation linked to specialist mental health support.

As part of the *Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW*, the Baird Government has provided funding to increase this to around 1850 individualised packages.

Further, the Baird Government is committed to increasing the supply and diversity of housing across NSW. The Baird Government has been working on a number of fronts to boost housing supply, including the supply of affordable housing.

Since coming to office, more than 7500 affordable dwellings have been approved across NSW under the Affordable Housing State Environmental Planning Policy.

The Baird Government's *Plan for Growing Sydney* identifies the need for housing for people on very low, low and moderate incomes. The Plan will ensure each Council has a Local Housing Strategy and requirements to deliver affordable housing on government led projects and on government owned land.

As you may also be aware, the Baird Government recently released *Social Housing in NSW; a discussion paper for input and comment*, which invited public feedback on the future of the social housing system. The discussion paper covered areas including supporting vulnerable people in social housing, creating more opportunities for tenants and making the system fairer for those in need. The Baird Government is now considering the more than 600 submissions that were received.

### Transport

The Baird Government is committed to delivering a high quality, reliable and accessible transport system in NSW and assisting those who are unable to use public transport.

The NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan was released in December 2012 to provide a comprehensive blueprint for the future, complete with more than 220 short, medium and long term actions. To support the Master Plan, we recognise that the state's key regional centres have more specific local transport needs and priorities which should be considered and planned for.

The Baird Government has delivered ten dedicated Regional Transport Plans to address the unique challenges of each region of NSW for the next 20 years and includes the things stakeholders in each region raised as being important during consultation. Regional transport plans recognise the importance of improved transport access to health and aged care services in the region's main centres and details strategies, programs and projects to address these issues.

In addition, the Baird Government's Community Transport Program helps meet the specialised needs of community groups, including people with disabilities and their carers, and those without access to transport. The program provides access to recreation, shopping and medical care, where conventional public transport services are not viable or appropriate. Since coming to office, the Baird Government doubled community transport funding over four years with an increase of \$12 million – the first funding boost to community transport since 1998.

As you may be aware, the Baird Government also provides the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS), which allows customers with qualifying severe and permanent disability to travel by taxi at half fare, up to a subsidy of \$30 per trip. The government is assessing ways to make services more affordable, including whether the taxi transport subsidy can be increased.

Regarding your comments about cycling and walking paths, you may be interested to know that on 2 March 2015, the Baird Government announced \$40 million will be invested in cycling and walking infrastructure in the next financial year – completing crucial missing links, building new routes to connect growing communities and improving access to regional centres. More than 380 projects will be delivered across NSW, providing access to safe, convenient and connected cycling and walking networks.

### Employment

The Baird Government recognises that access to meaningful employment is crucial to maintaining good mental health and feeling like part of the community. One of the key ways to improve employment initiatives for people with a mental illness is to reduce stigma in the workplace. The Baird Government supports organisations who work to reduce stigma, such as R U OK?, and provides funding to Beyond Blue and Black Dog Institute.

As part of the *Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW*, the Baird Government has committed \$3.8 million for four LikeMind co-location centres which enable people with a mental illness to access mental health, general health and social services, including employment services, in the one location.

### Legal assistance

The Baird Government is committed to making the justice system accessible to people living with mental illness. The Baird Government provides ongoing funding to Legal Aid NSW to explore partnerships between legal and medical service providers to address clients' legal and health issues in a seamless and holistic manner.

As you may be aware, Legal Aid's Mental Health Advocacy Service is dedicated to clients with mental health issues. Legal Aid provides training to staff on working with people with a mental illness, and runs training for community workers who work closely with mental health clients and who are well placed to identify legal issues and make timely referrals.

### Young people

One of the key focus areas of the *Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW* is prevention and early intervention, with an emphasis on youth mental health. The Baird Government is committed to increasing access to mental health services for youth and adolescents by:

- enhancing the number of Whole Family Teams, with three additional teams to be established to provide specialist mental health, drug and alcohol and parenting interventions in the home
- increase to 18 School Link Coordinators across NSW to create stronger links between school counsellors and mental health staff, train education workers on child and adolescent mental health, and promote early interventions in school settings
- providing \$2 million to create an additional four Young People's Outreach Program sites to provide practical assistance to young people with serious mental illness to develop living schools, access education and training, improve relationships and link with other services, such as income support, which will help reduce the amount of time they spend in hospital.

The Baird Government takes seriously the delivery of services to assist those that are amongst the most vulnerable in society. We look forward to continuing to work closely with BEING to improve the lives of those suffering from a mental illness.

Thank you again for bringing these matters to my attention. For further information, please call my office on (02) 8574 7100.