



# The Coalition's Policy for Efficient Mental Health Research and Services

August 2013

## Key Points

The Coalition will deliver more efficient mental health research and services.

We will provide \$18 million over four years to the mental health provider Orygen to establish the country's first National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health.

The National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health will perform cutting edge clinical trials, using new and more effective treatments, so that we can better understand the rising tide of mental illness amongst young people. The Centre will also invest in new research to explore how better mental health can lift our nation's economic productivity.

Attracting and nurturing a new generation of dynamic mental health workers will be a key aim of the first National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health. The Centre is important to meeting the mental health challenge facing our nation: 75 per cent of all mental illness manifests itself in people under the age of 25.

Our commitment is an important step to promoting mental health research and training for mental health researchers.

More broadly, the Coalition will ensure that existing resources in the mental health sector are being targeted as effectively and productively as possible.

To do this we will task the National Mental Health Commission with assessing the effectiveness of existing mental health programmes to ensure waste and duplication are minimised. This assessment will drive a genuine evidence-based approach to future policy with a focus on productivity and on what really works.

In keeping with our more streamlined, targeted system we will work with the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre to establish a comprehensive new e-mental health platform.

The Coalition will invest \$5 million in the comprehensive new e-mental health platform. This investment will help bring together a wide range of existing services into one efficient, electronic service. It will allow young people to seamlessly access care 24 hours a day with anonymity and will provide pathways to treatment and to ensure young people are accessing the best available services for their situation.

The Coalition is committed to delivering more research to tackle mental health problems.



## Introduction

Mental illness will impact almost half the Australian population over a lifetime. After heart disease and cancer, mental illness is Australia's most prevalent health problem.

The Coalition has an unrivalled record in the support and funding it has provided Australians suffering from mental health issues.

As Health Minister in the Howard Government, Tony Abbott introduced the Better Access to Mental Health initiative in 2006. This \$1.9 billion initiative was Australia's largest ever mental health boost at the time and provided for the establishment of *headspace*.

The Better Access to Mental Health initiative improved mental health care plans, extended GPs' ability to treat mental illness, and greatly expanded patients' access to Medicare funded psychologist consultations. The initiative also boosted funding for mental health treatment in regional areas not well served by private psychiatrists and psychologists, with a special emphasis on new services to prevent suicide and to treat substance abuse.

In 2010 the Coalition announced its *Real Action Plan for Better Mental Health*. This was a comprehensive policy to take real action to boost frontline mental health services, with a focus on early psychosis intervention centres and funding an additional 60 headspace sites to provide young people with information and services relating to general health and wellbeing, as well as mental health, alcohol and drug services.

It was only because of the sustained pressure from the Coalition's announcements, combined with our proven record on mental health in Government, that prompted Labor into acting on mental health in the 2011-12 Budget, including adopting some key 2010 Coalition commitments such as Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centres (EPPICs) and an expansion of headspace sites.

The Coalition has a strong record of investing in better mental health services.

Early intervention and treatment has been shown to greatly improve long term health outcomes.

A Coalition Government will continue to support the expansion of headspace to 100 centres across the country. It was the previous Coalition government that provided for the establishment of the first 30 centres and at the last election committed to a further expansion.

The Coalition remains committed to the current roll-out of EPPICs and will continue to support their future expansion.



# The Plan

## 1. A National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health

The Coalition will provide \$18 million over four years to the mental health care provider and research organisation Orygen to establish the country's first National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health.

The National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health, will build upon the already substantial foundations of Orygen Youth Health Research Centre (OYHRC), as an enabler of the national youth mental health policy reforms, and will be another world leading feature of the Australian medical research landscape.

OYHRC, located in the heart of Melbourne's world famous Parkville research precinct, is already the international engine room and laboratory for early intervention and holistic youth mental health care and is key to enhancing and sustaining the innovation and workforce development that are the lifeblood of the national youth mental health reform process.

To build on Orygen existing strengths in mental health, the Coalition will provide this internationally renowned organisation with \$18 million over four years to establish and operate, in collaboration with research partnership nodes in other States, a National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health. This will bring substantial capacity to an already well-established and extensive programme of research.

The National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health will:

- undertake cutting edge clinical trials to find new and innovative treatments for mental illness in young people;
- invest in new programmes of research specifically looking at the impact enhanced mental health can have on lifting national economic productivity and reducing deliberate self-harm and suicide.
- provide training, career support and information resources to up to 12,000 mental health clinicians and service planners by 2020.
- perfect new forms of intervention that can be used to treat young people through headspace, EPPICs and e-mental health services.
- evaluation and refinement of the national system of youth mental health care.

Specifically aiming this investment at mental illness in young people is crucial because 75 per cent of all mental illness manifests itself in people under the age of 25.

One in three young people experience moderate to high levels of psychological distress.



The dangers of mental illness in our young people can also manifest itself in other ways with schizophrenia, for example, the third leading contributor to the burden of disease and injury in Australian males aged 15 to 24, and the fifth leading contributor for females. Suicide is also now the leading cause of death for young people aged 15 to 24.

A report prepared by Access Economics estimates that the financial cost to Australia of mental illness in young people aged 12 to 25 was \$10.6 billion in 2009, approximately 70 per cent of which is productivity lost due to lower employment, absenteeism and premature death of young people with mental illness.

The National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health will be a nationally shared resource that will secure and enhance Australia's global leadership position in young mental health. The Centre will be located in the Parkville medical research precinct in Melbourne.

## 2. Supporting the National Mental Health Commission

The Coalition will ensure mental health resources are being used as effectively and productively as possible.

The *Obsessive Hope Disorder* report, instigated by Professor John Mendoza, found there is an urgent need to end the confusion between the Commonwealth and State government regarding which level of government was accountable for what type of funding. The report also raised concerns about the need to ensure money is being spent on services that are actually working.

Accordingly, the Coalition will task the National Mental Health Commission, and provide it with the resources it requires, to assess the effectiveness of all existing mental health programmes across both government and the non-government sectors. The goal of this comprehensive review will be to ensure services are being properly targeted at patients, that services are not being duplicated and that programmes are not being unnecessarily burdened by red tape.

We believe a proper evaluation of mental health programmes is necessary to ensure that the delivery of services gets to those most in need and that funding is provided to those programmes that have proven to be most effective on the frontline.

As part of this process, we will identify gaps in both mental health research and workforce development and training taking into account the needs of not only metropolitan areas, but also the specific challenges of rural, regional and remote Australia.



### 3. An Easily Accessible, Fully Integrated e-Mental Health System

The Coalition will provide the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre with \$5 million to establish a comprehensive new e-mental health platform. It will bring together a wide range of these existing services into one electronic service.

We need to continue to improve access to mental health services for our young people and ensure it is delivered in a cost effective and efficient way.

There are a range of services that provide valuable assistance, including ReachOut, Inspire, Headspace, and Beyondblue. With over 95 per cent of our young people using the Internet each day, it makes sense that each has an electronic platform to assist young people to better navigate the wide range of services that would best assist their circumstances.

This will enable young people to access mental health services at any time and in any location thus overcoming the barriers of geography, socio-economic status or literacy and effectively triage young people into appropriate interventions.

The bringing together of these services under one web-based platform will be coordinated and developed by the Young and Well CRC and its partners. To access the site, young people would require only one login to engage with a range of innovative online mental health services. It would also be used to support and facilitate face to face services across different providers.

Importantly, it would make better use of professional tools that can be used to support face to face services. This includes biofeedback mechanisms (that electronically monitor bodily functions) which are captured via mobile applications and developed specifically for young people to monitor mood, sleep, diet and exercise, detect, manage and treat mental illness. The integrated e-mental health system would support much more effective and coordinated use of rapidly evolving new technology.



## Cost

The Coalition's *Policy for Efficient Mental Health Research and Services* will invest \$18 million over four years to the mental health provider Orygen to establish the country's first National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health. Our policy will also provide the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre with \$5 million over three years to establish a comprehensive new e-mental health platform.



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Opportunity.



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For further details of the Coalition's Plan go to  
[www.realsolutions.org.au](http://www.realsolutions.org.au)