

## **Budget 2003:Comments on Mental Disability**

Catholic Health Australia response to the budget 2003 on mental illness is 'mental health is National Health Priority, not that you know of it from the budget. Depression, dementia, psychoses and other mental illnesses remain sources of huge disability burden and health system costs, although excellent strategies are available for preventing and treating these illnesses to improve health outcomes. CHA recommended that \$250m be quarantined in 2002-03 for a third Mental Health Plan and for increased dementia services, in recognition of the rise in incidence. There was an excellent opportunity this budget to embark on a comprehensive plan for mental health over the next decade-it was missed. The danger will be that mental health will continue to remain a third order priority when the Commonwealth and States renegotiate the Australian Health Care Agreements. This issue requires national leadership.'

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