



Mental health funding welcome but chronic staff shortages loom

Catholic Health Australia (CHA) has welcomed Labor's \$1 billion mental health funding commitment and called for further action to ease chronic staff shortages.

"With demand for mental health services skyrocketing, we welcome extra funding for this essential care," said CHA Director of Health Policy, Dr Katharine Bassett.

"The extra 1,200 training places for mental health staff are urgently needed but we must do more in the short-term to ease chronic staffing shortages which are a huge barrier to expanding care.

"The next government must ease restrictions on overseas-trained psychiatrists which stop them working in cities for 10 years after they arrive in Australia.

"The demand for psychiatric care in metropolitan areas is soaring, yet regulatory barriers prevent experienced overseas-trained psychiatrists from filling these gaps.

"Our not-for-profit private hospitals have the capacity to offer high-quality care, but we simply don't have enough psychiatrists to meet demand. By easing restrictions, we can provide patients with more timely interventions, which are critical for effective mental health treatment."

In a position paper on mental health released today, CHA is also calling for changes to guidelines that require mental health day program patients to be admitted under the care of a hospital-credentialed psychiatrist.

CHA proposes expanding admission rights to other qualified mental health professionals, such as experienced general practitioners and psychologists, to improve access and reduce delays in care.

"To provide care more quickly, we must trust and empower qualified healthcare professionals to help people access mental health services," Dr Bassett said.

CHA is also calling for a transition to a National Private Price so hospitals receive funding based on the specific care provided rather than the length of stay. This would improve efficiency and help ensure the delivery of private mental health services is viable.

Learn more about CHA's election priorities and position papers at <https://cha.org.au/federal-election-2025/>

Notes to editors: *Catholic Health Australia (CHA) is Australia's largest non-government, not-for-profit group of health, community, and aged care providers. Our members operate 80 hospitals in each Australian state and the ACT, providing around 30 per cent of private hospital care and 5 per cent of public hospital care, in addition to extensive community and residential aged care. There are 63 private hospitals operated by CHA members, including St Vincent's, Calvary, Mater, St John of God and Cabrini. CHA members also provide approximately 12 per cent of all aged care facilities across Australia, in addition to around 20 per cent of home care services. 25 per cent of our members' service provision is regional, rural and remote.*