

**A Different Federal Budget Approach***Dealing with Mental Illness in Fiscal 2019 and Beyond*

“*There’s overwhelming evidence about the lifetime benefits of investing in prevention of mental health issues with early intervention from birth to 12 years – there is a need for the focus on youth mental health to become a national priority*”

* *CEO, National Mental Health Commission 4.*

**Mental Illness** | The Impacts

It is understood that **$9 billion** was spent on mental health during 2015-16, 30% of which was provided by the Federal Government.

This represents $373 per person expended on mental health, a 5.4 % increase since 2011-12, a trend that is being maintained. (TBA, 2018)

There is startling evidence about the increasing presentations of mental illness in Australia:

* Recently, the Youth Mental Health Professor at the University of Melbourne reported that **anxiety is now being clinically diagnosed in children as young as 6** 1.
* Untreated, **anxiety is linked to depression and substance misuse** 2.
* Child visits to Victorian emergency departments for **mental health issues tripled** between 2008-2015 3, 4.

* Nationally, within the next 24 hours, it is projected that:
  + 750 people will present with mental health issues to Hospital Emergency Departments 5.
  + >400 people will contact *Beyond Blue* seeking help for depression 6.
  + **7 adults and 1 youth will commit suicide** 7, 8.

In the past 12 months **65,000 suicide attempts** were made 9*.*

**A Pro-Active Approach** | Invest into illness *Preventatives.*

The vast majority of Federal and State Government mental health expenditure is directed at **the consequences** of mental illness.

Consider the benefits of a similar investment into the **early intervention** of mental illness, the reduction in incidence and impact.

A May 2018 report from KPMG, *Investing to Save* 10highlighted that:

* At a macroeconomic level, mental illness cost the economy approximately $60 billion annually
* Realistic improvements in mental ill-health rates could improve workforce participation rates by 30%
* Three recommendations embracing 10 sub-recommendations including the benefits arising from early intervention initiatives concluded that

*‘In total these recommendations would generate between $8.2 billion and $12.7 billion from an investment of <$4.4billion.’*

Evidently, the social and financial impact of a reduction in the incidence of mental illness would be enormously positive for the community.

**‘A for Attitude’** | A Preventative Tool

The Attitude Books Foundation Inc (ABFI) was founded in 2015 to equip every child in Australia, as they approach 9 years of age, with a ‘resilience cultivating toolkit’ designed to **raise more emotionally resilient children** and prepare them to deal positively with the inevitable stresses of modern life they will encounter 11.

The Foundation deploys its unique and proven early intervention approach to achieve this objective.

This early intervention approach is already in use inschools in Victoria and NSW and is the subject of an **Evidence Based Research** program being undertaken in 2019 by Headspace and funded by the Federal Dept. of Health.

In making this submission to aid the formulation of the 2019 Federal Budget the Attitude Books Foundation Inc encourages **a distinct shift in Mental Health budget emphasis towards the prevention of this condition.**

Clearly, there is potential for significant social benefit should such an approach be adopted.

The Foundation looks forward to favourable consideration of such an approach and stands ready to become actively involved in early intervention initiatives aimed at reducing mental illness presentations.

***Closing thought*** | The power of preventative investments

Every day in Australia 3 times as many people die through suicide as are killed in motor vehicle accidents 12, 13.

A coordinated Governmental effort over the past 20 years to prevent motor vehicle fatalities has produced a 50% reduction in road deaths - imagine the impact if a similar approach was taken to reducing the incidence of mental illness.



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Chair – Attitude Books Foundation Inc.



Julie Davey

Founder – Attitude Books Foundation Inc.



Bill Chalkley

Secretary – Attitude Books Foundation Inc.

# *Reference List*

1. *Professor Patrick McGorry AO Professor of Youth Mental Health at the University of Melbourne*
2. *Associate Professor Vanessa Cobham University of Queensland School of Psychology Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences*
3. *Murdoch Children's Research Institute Royal Children’s Hospital Parkville Vic*
4. *Dr Peggy Brown AO immediate past CEO National Mental Health Commission Sydney NSW*
5. *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Canberra ACT*
6. *beyondblue Hawthorn Victoria*
7. *Australian Bureau of Statistics Canberra*
8. *Headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation Melbourne Vic*
9. *Lifeline Australia Deakin West ACT*
10. *KPMG Collins Street Melbourne Vic*
11. *Attitude Books Foundation Inc. McCrae Vic*
12. *Sources of info about rates of Suicide – Australian Bureau of Statistics Canberra*
13. *Sources of info about road fatalities - Australian Transport Safety Bureau, Canberra, 2005.*

