



## Federal Budget 2020-21

### Member Briefing

The Australian Alcohol and other Drugs Council (AADC) has summarised measures from the Federal Budget 2020-21 relevant to the alcohol and other drugs sector and the communities we support.

#### Overview

Whilst health portfolio spending will increase by \$11.5b over the previous year's budget, a large amount of this funding will continue Australia's COVID-19 response across a range of existing initiatives. There is notable investment in mental health, though little of this is new funding. There is also recognition of the health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including the need to partner with Aboriginal community controlled health organisations.

An ongoing solution to address projected funding shortfalls from 1 July 2021 associated with the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) was announced in the budget for Department of Social Services funded activities. Alcohol and other drug services receiving ERO funding are not included in this decision. AADC remains in discussions with the office of the Minister for Health and the Department for a resolution to ERO funding before 30 June 2021.

#### Alcohol and other drugs

Increased use of telehealth and digital access have been a feature of the delivery of alcohol and other drug services in the context of COVID-19. The budget has extended for a further six months access to Medicare-subsidised telehealth services, including general practitioner, nursing, midwifery, allied health, allied mental health services, specialist services and Medicare-subsidised pathology. During this period a long-term design for the permanent adoption of telehealth will be developed.

Whilst the *National Preventive Health Strategy* is referenced in the budget papers as a major part of the Government's Long Term National Health Plan, there is no mention of program funding. This includes the two proposed focus areas of interest to the alcohol and other drugs sector, namely 'reducing tobacco use' and 'reducing alcohol and other drug-related harm'. The *National Preventive Health Strategy* is still in the development phase and is expected to be finalised in March 2021.

National Health and Medical Research Council grant outcomes announced in the budget include:

- \$2.5m in funding for the Centre of Research on Achieving the Tobacco Endgame to identify strategies for smoking cessation that are effective, equitable and acceptable to the public and policymakers;
- \$1.068m in funding to the University of New South Wales to develop interventions relating to methamphetamine dependence amongst men who have sex with men.

