

Open letter to Minister for Health, Greg Hunt

3 March 2022

Dear Minister

We write to urge you to immediately guarantee future funding for the National Ice Action Strategy which provides some \$60M each year for national alcohol and other drug treatment services and represents about 50% of the Commonwealth government's current investment

Alarming the Federal Government has been silent on whether this funding will continue beyond 30 June 2022. The end of this funding would be a significant setback to a sector that is having to respond to surging demand for its services, reduced capacity and a frontline workforce that has been under immense strain as a result of the pandemic.

The failure to guarantee the continuation of treatment funding through the National Ice Action Strategy creates a damaging limbo for services across the country.

It is inconceivable that a government would not continue to fund such a critical program given the harms associated with methamphetamines and its national impact on individuals, families and communities across the country.

If the government essentially cuts this funding it will result in the closure of many counselling services, residential rehabilitation services, early intervention and prevention services and family and community network support services.

Instead of cutting critical funding, we call on the government to commit additional funding in the March Federal Budget sufficient to tackle the acute underfunding of alcohol and other drug services across the country.

As a sector we are keen to work with the Federal Government to secure this funding as quickly as possible so that we can provide certainty to service users, their families and the community, and service providers who, on top of delivering services during a pandemic, are facing staff retention, recruitment and service planning challenges ahead of the June deadline.

Currently there are not enough treatment services to meet community demand. As organisations that represent the nation's alcohol and other drugs sector, we urge the Federal Government to immediately confirm this critical funding.

Signatories:

