Minister for Health John Elferink said the Government has placed mental health firmly on the agenda and will make funding available in Budget 2015 to address the issue.

“The funding will be used to support the expansion of existing services and fill identified service delivery gaps,” Mr Elferink said.

“Mental health is a real issue in the community and we must find ways that we can assist those in need by offering reliable and effective services.”

Priority funding areas include targeting mental health and wellbeing programs for youth, outreach services and mental health court liaison services.

“There is also a need to have greater access to mental health services in remote areas of the Northern Territory,” Mr Elferink said.

“Almost fifty percent of people seeking community and inpatient mental health care in the Northern Territory are Indigenous. Such over-representation of Indigenous people accessing mental health care also suggests that more work needs to be done to improve mental health of Indigenous people.

“There is also scope to better involve our police and emergency services personnel as well as educators, who are on the ground and engaged in the community.

“These are the employees that are dealing with people on a day-to-day basis and could be provided with increased training to pick up tell-tale signs of mental illness.

“In many areas of our mental health system, there needs to be greater involvement at a local level.”

Minister Elferink said that greater synergies between the mental health and justice systems could be created, should people find themselves involved in both systems.

“While it is early days, I will explore options for how we can make both of these systems work together in a much smarter way,” Mr Elferink said.