Tuesday April 14

Secure Care Facility for Northern Territory

The NT Government today announced that secure care facilities will be established in the Northern Territory for young people and adults with complex needs.

Children and Families Minister Malarndirri McCarthy said the facilities were a recommendation from the 2007 audit of client care undertaken by Dr Howard Bath.

Ms McCarthy said $13.9 million had been committed in 2009-10 and 2010-11 to construct the stand alone secure care facilities, along with additional beds in Alice Springs and Darwin Hospitals.

Additional funding of $11.4 million will be provided for operational costs once programs are fully implemented.

“A secure facility provides a 24-hour care environment to ensure the safety of clients requiring behavioural intervention and support, as well as the broader community,” Ms McCarthy said.

“This facility will enhance services for high risk young people and adults who may not be mentally ill but have unstable and difficult behaviour, representing a risk of harm to themselves or others in the community.

“The model proposed for the Northern Territory is based on short term assessment and stabilisation facilities, with complementary secure care, therapeutic and transition services.”

The funding will enable construction of two 8-bed facilities in both Darwin and Alice Springs for adults and young people, as well as provide six additional beds in Alice Springs Hospital and five additional beds at Royal Darwin Hospital.

Ms McCarthy said the Territory Community Services High Risk Audit Report undertaken in 2007 by the current Children’s Commissioner Dr Howard Bath noted a gap in services for young people or adults with aggressive or disturbed behaviours.

“Typically these are clients who may not be mentally ill or charged with a serious offence, however show signs of high risk behaviour likely to result in imminent risk or harm to themselves or others,” Ms McCarthy said.

“The NT Government is committed to transforming the Territory’s mental health system to make it one of the most progressive in Australia. Since 2001 Labor Government has doubled the mental health budget to over $35 million.”

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