Healthy Territory: New 24 Hour Hotline in Mental Health Budget Boost

A 24-hour mental health hotline will help people with a mental illness get appropriate treatment sooner by providing health professionals with a round the clock triage service.

Children and Families Minister Kon Vatskalis said the Henderson Government is delivering $930,000 in Budget 2010 for the hotline.

“This funding will include recruiting an extra five mental health professionals to staff the hotline 24 hours a day,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“This hotline will provide immediate advice to health staff on appropriate treatment available when a person suffering from a suspected mental illness presents at a hospital or emergency department.

“This will help to reduce the time for referrals to mental health services and put patients in contact with the right treatment sooner.

“The hotline will also provide a referral point for people requiring Alcohol and Other Drugs Services, particularly after hours.”

Mr Vatskalis said the mental wellbeing of Territorians was a priority of the Henderson Government, with research showing one in five Territorians suffer from mental illness at some stage in their life.

“The Territory Government has more than doubled funding to mental health to more than $42 million since 2001” he said.

“I am committed to transforming the Territory’s mental health system to make it one of the most progressive in Australia, and the hotline will helping people with a mental illness get appropriate treatment sooner.”

Mr Vatskalis said the Henderson Government will also provide an extra $9.4 million to continue to roll-out new Secure Care facilities in Darwin and Alice Springs and $2.3 million to enhance services.

“These new facilities, announced last year, will meet the needs of at risk young people and adults,” he said.

“The facilities will enable health professionals to better treat children and young people, and adults with disabilities.
“The facilities will provide a 24-hour care environment and funding will enable construction of two 8-bed facilities in both Darwin and Alice Springs for adults and young people, as well as provide additional beds in Alice Springs and Royal Darwin Hospitals.”

Mr Vatskalis said applications have been lodged with the Development Consent Authority for the construction of the facilities in Lowther Road, Bees Creek and Cotterill Road, Alice Springs.

“These facilities will provide safe, controlled environments for clients to receive their therapeutic treatments.”

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