Media Release

John Elferink
Minister for Mental Health Services

Mental health to be firmly on the agenda

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Minister for Mental Health Services John Elferink has outlined the Country Liberals Government’s plan to place mental health firmly on the agenda.

Minister Elferink said in Parliament today that more attention must be placed on the issue of mental health.

“Since my appointment to this position, I have made it a priority to meet with individuals and organisations in the health sector, in particular, the mental health sector,” Mr Elferink said.

Priority areas identified for greater focus in the mental health sector include:

- Increased access to primary services in remote and regional areas
- Filling an existing gap between primary and acute services
- Integration between the mental health and justice systems

“There is an opportunity to increase the level of accessibility to primary mental health services in remote areas of the Northern Territory,” Mr Elferink said.

“I will be looking at programs to train more Indigenous mental health workers in the community, to ensure that assistance for affected individuals is never far away.

“There needs to be greater local involvement at a local level to address these issues.

“I have also identified a gap between those that are subject to an acute mental illness and those that may be on the verge of developing a mental illness. Access to supported accommodation and short-term crisis intervention will play a large role in assisting with recovery.

“Additionally, it has become apparent that there are opportunities to create greater synergies between the mental health and justice systems, 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 better and smarter way.
“Going forward, there will be an increased focus on mental health services amongst youth in our community, noting that the earlier we can intervene and provide services to youth experiencing mental health issues, the greater the chance we will have to improve their mental health wellbeing.

“I look forward to continuing the discussion with experts, non-government organisations and the community to improve the delivery of mental health services in the Northern Territory,” Mr Elferink said.

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