Today saw the launch of the Territory’s first ever Mental Health Strategic Plan, following the Territory Government’s commitment to enhance mental health services.

“The vision of the Northern Territory Mental Health Service Strategic Plan 2015 – 2021 is to promote, protect and enhance the mental health of all Territorians across all stages of life,” Minister for Health John Elferink said.

“Our mission is to establish a mental health system that provides high quality, culturally appropriate and holistic programs and services that respond to the changing needs and expectations of Territorians.”

The Department of Health developed the plan in close consultation with the community and stakeholders who provided valuable input through participation in consultation forums and focus groups held across Darwin, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy, Katherine and Tennant Creek last year.

The Plan provides a framework for collaborative action across health, justice, education, housing, welfare, and child protection and seeks to:

- Promote a culturally responsive approach by working to include cultural frameworks and language into service provision and information
- Grow awareness of warning signs to promote the ability of individuals and communities to respond to individuals in need
- Increase the availability of information and support for those at risk, their families, carers, and significant others
- Strengthen communities and individuals through targeted activities that build well being and resilience

"It is a priority and has been a priority for some time, this significant investment helps us to address these matters that affect not only the Northern Territory but also the nation," said Department of Health Chief Executive Professor Len Notaras.
"Reducing the stigma associated with mental health has been a focus we've worked together with our stakeholders to address."

An additional $3 million of funding was committed by the Territory Government to enhance mental health services. Part of this funding has been allocated to the development of Darwin’s first ever Youth In-patient Program at Royal Darwin Hospital Campus.

The facility, currently in development, is expected to be operational by January 2016 and will have a multidisciplinary team of specialist mental health staff working to meet the complex health needs of this vulnerable population.

The Youth Inpatient Program will offer inpatient services and a community day program to assess, treat, engage and educate young people about mental health and well-being. The team will provide evidence based, psycho-education, therapeutic input and support to young people and their families.

The plan aligns with the NT Suicide Prevention Strategic Action plan 2015-2018 which offers a comprehensive whole of government strategy towards preventing suicide-related deaths through addressing various risk factors.

**Media Contact:** Dimitra Grehl 0439 640 895