WHAT PRICE A TROUBLED LIFE?

The Martin Government stands condemned for having the lowest number of mental health beds per head of population of any State or Territory while presiding over the highest suicide rate in the country.

“That the suicide rate in the Territory is double the national average is shocking enough, but the fact we also have only half the national average of mental health beds is nothing short of disgraceful,” says Jodeen Carney, Leader of the Opposition.

“Despite the surge of GST funds into the Territory’s coffers the number of mental health beds actually fell between 2001 and 2005.

“That fact sits uncomfortably alongside the Health Minister’s repeated boasts about the 64% increase in health spending since the Martin Government came to office. “

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released today show the Territory had a suicide rate of 25 per 100,000 people between 2001 – 2005 compared to a national average of just 11 per 100,000.

The Report on Government Services 2007 shows the Australian average of mental health beds in public hospitals and publicly funded community residential units is just over 40 beds per 100,000 whilst in the Territory it's just over 20 per 100,000.

Not only do we lack the beds necessary to deliver adequate care for people suffering mental illness, we also spend the least on health care professionals employed in mental health services and have the fewest number of mental health patient days.

“Whatever measure one chooses to use regarding the level of expenditure on mental health, the Martin Government is failing people suffering from a mental illness.

“It’s time for a renewed focus on the causes of mental illness and an increase in resources for the treatment of people suffering from a mental illness.”

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