Strengthening Mental Health

LABOR’S PLAN TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
Foreword

Territory Labor has a long term commitment to improving mental health services in the Northern Territory.

**Suicide prevention will be our top priority and we will aim to halve suicide rates over the next 10 years.**

Suicide has a devastating impact upon families and communities, particularly in our tight knit remote communities.

If we get the balance right between the resourcing and delivery of community and hospital services, we can improve mental health wellbeing, improve access to services, and achieve our targets in our quest to improve the quality of life for many affected Territorians.

Territory Labor will invest across the life spectrum to improve the resilience and mental wellness of all Territorians.

Michael Gunner  
Leader of the Opposition
Early Childhood.

Working with the Commonwealth Government and the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector, we will fund 30 nurses and 15 Aboriginal family support workers to roll out the Nurse Family Partnership program supporting more than 500 children and their families. These home visits will support parenting and post-natal maternal health in these critical first two years of a child’s life.

Territory Labor will enhance the Department of Health Yellow book with e-health capabilities and recall capacity to make sure children are immunised on time, and have their health check every year from birth to school. These are vital measure to make sure toddlers and children are meeting their physical and behavioural developmental milestones and early intervention can occur for any issues identified.

Children and Young People.

Territory Labor will work with Principals Australia to fully implement Mindmatters in a consistent way across NT middle and senior schools. It is currently implemented in an ad-hoc way. Mindmatters’ extensive online resources help schools develop their own strategy to promote good mental health and wellbeing in their school. It is backed by beyondblue and is the most effective framework used in the Northern Territory. This will compliment Kidsmatters in primary schools.

Territory Labor supports the use of web-based resources for young people to access mental health support. We will improve information available to young people about what safe online resources are available.

Territory Labor will work with the Commonwealth to secure a headspace service in Katherine for young people with early onset psychosis. Katherine has been identified as an area of need and we will commit $150,000 towards the establishment of the service.

Territory Labor will undertake a study to establish the right number of school councillors required to meet the needs of students as identified in the Gone Too Soon Parliamentary Inquiry.

Territory Labor supports the delivery of specialist services in remote areas.

Territory Labor will renew the Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Health, so that the health and mental health needs of children in out of home care are prioritised for services.

Territory Labor will ensure that there is a mental health response to children before the justice system, either through the court process or within detention. We are supportive of expanding Court Liaison Nurses in the youth justice court and improving health services overall in the detention system.
Working with Communities to Promote Good Mental Health and Support Early Intervention.

Territory Labor will work with community health centres, the NGO sector and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to develop local strategies to improve mental health literacy in communities, to support early identification and referral for support.

Territory Labor will work with local communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to improve culturally appropriate Government responses to suicide and suicide prevention.

Territory Labor will provide $3 million over 4 years to trial the implementation of the Housing Accommodation Support Initiative in Darwin, a partnership between the Department of Health, the Department of Housing and the NGO sector to provide support services. This trial, to commence in Darwin and Palmerston, will provide support and stability of tenancy for up to 200 people with a mental illness each year in public housing.

This is an evidence based initiative to support a person with a mental illness or with a dual diagnosis to maintain their tenancy, reduce homelessness, improve life skills and socialisation, and ensure that their mental health is monitored to prevent a return to hospital. It is also shown to reduce the demand for inpatient services. Health provides the clinical services, Housing provides tenancy and the NGO sector provides the personal supports.

Territory Labor supports the use of tele-health in the provision of specialist mental health services in remote communities. There is a shortage of psychiatrists and this is one way of helping meet the demand for specialist services in remote communities.

Territory Labor wants to hear from people who receive mental health services and their families. We support feedback from consumers and support the establishment of consumer advocate positions to improve mental health services.

Territory Labor is a strong supporter of the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, as providers for people with a disability, including for mental illness. Territory Labor would closely monitor and consult about the rollout so that the needs of all eligible Territorians are met.
Workforce Initiatives.

Territory Labor will partner with the tertiary education sector to offer:

- 10 postgraduate scholarships per year for registered nurses who would like to specialise in mental health nursing;
- 10 scholarships per year for enrolled mental health nursing; and
- The opportunity for mental health specialisation for Aboriginal Health Practitioners and Aboriginal Community Workers to improve cultural competency.

Territory Labor will support the rollout of mental health first aid training to frontline workers, including for Police, Teachers, Child Protection, Correctional Services and Housing.

Improving Transparency.

Territory Labor will evaluate and review the effectiveness of the current NT Mental Health Strategy and Suicide Prevention Action Plans.

Territory Labor supports the delivery of evidence based services. As part of our commitment to improving mental health services, we support improved monitoring and evaluation of Government funded services.

Territory Labor will establish a set of indicators to monitor and measure improvements in service delivery and wellness in our community, that are consistent with national reporting requirements. We want to track our progress to meet our goal of reducing the rate of suicide in our community and improve services in all settings.
## Costings

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<th>Initiatives</th>
<th>$m 16/17</th>
<th>$m 17/18</th>
<th>$m 18/19</th>
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<td>Nurse Family Partnerships</td>
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** All other initiatives to be funded from within existing resources