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## **Budget boost for Mental Health Services**

Minister for Health, Morris Iemma said today that emergency and community mental health services would be significantly enhanced by new mental health funding detailed in today's **\$10.9 billion recurrent budget for health** in NSW.

Recurrent funding of **\$854 million has been dedicated to mental health services** in 2005/06, an increase of \$71 million (9.1 per cent) over 2004/05.

The 2005/06 Budget includes \$22 million in new mental health funding, and \$48 million from the \$241 million package allocated over four years (2004-08). The 2004/05 Budget provided \$25 million from this package.

**The \$22 million in new mental health funding for 2005/06 includes:**

- **The expansion of the Psychiatric Emergency Care unit program; and**
- **New community based initiatives.**

In 2004, the NSW Government established two pilot Psychiatric Emergency Care (PEC) units at Liverpool and Nepean Hospitals.

"These pilot units have proved successful in ensuring that patients who present to an emergency department with a mental illness are quickly assessed and referred to the right place for treatment," Mr Iemma said.

"They consist of specialist mental health staff to commence assessments at the same time as patients receive their acute care.

"The units have significantly reduced the average length of stay in emergency departments for patients with a mental illness. As a result, they have also helped to alleviate emergency department and access block pressure in two of our busiest hospitals," Mr Iemma said.

The expansion of the PEC program will:

- Permanently fund the pilot PEC units at Liverpool and Nepean Hospitals;
- Expand PEC units in metropolitan hospitals to St George, St Vincents and Hornsby Hospitals;
- Fund the planning of a further three PEC services in consultation with Area Health Services; and
- Provision for the expansion of the rural emergency response model currently trialled on the Mid North Coast following an evaluation of the service.

Mr Lemma said the Government's commitment to providing a full range of community mental health services was reflected by the fact that almost half of the mental health budget was dedicated to this sector.

"The funding boost for community based services aims to improve the quality of people's lives by supporting them in their homes, helping them stay well and reducing the need for acute services," Mr Lemma said.

The additional funding for community based mental health services will broaden the range of services available in the following key areas:

- **Community rehabilitation services:** Better coordination, greater access and reduced long-term disability by providing more allied health staff such as psychologists and occupational therapists in a community setting;
- **Mental health services for older people:** A recommendation of the Upper House Inquiry- more nursing, allied and medical staff to provide better access and more equitable services for older people with dementia and other mental illnesses as the population ages;
- **Dual diagnosis / Early intervention for persons 16 to 25:** This includes a range of regional and metropolitan pilot initiatives to support people with substance abuse and mental illness at risk of homelessness; and
- **Adolescent Mental Health:** young people in contact with the Juvenile Justice system will be targeted, aiming to divert them from the criminal justice system.

**Further mental health enhancements to be funded this year from the \$241 million package include:**

- \$1.4 million for the commissioning of a new 20 bed non-acute unit at Campbelltown Hospital (construction commenced in March). This unit is one of five new 20 bed non-acute units ;
- \$2.5 million for a 15 bed psychiatric intensive care unit at Hornsby Hospital;
- \$2.5 million for 16 acute beds at Dubbo (increasing to \$3.2 million in 2006/07);
- \$8 million to expand the Housing Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI Stage 3), to provide a range of medium to high accommodation support places operated by non-Government organisation (NGOs);
- \$4 million for an integrated statewide child and adolescent mental health service, encompassing emergency assessment, supported beds in local hospitals, and step up/step down day centres linked to tertiary hospitals and community facilities;
- \$1.9 million for workforce development programs including support to Universities for mental health nursing development.

In addition, the new 15 bed acute mental health unit at Katoomba will open in early 2006 at an annual cost of \$3.6 million.

"The additional funding for mental health under this Budget will enhance the range and balance of services achievable, from emergency care and psychiatric inpatient services, through to community rehabilitation and support in the home," Mr Lemma said.

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