



Kevin Humphries MP

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Healthy Lifestyles

Minister for Western NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

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HELPING THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

Many of the State's most severely drug and alcohol dependent people will receive additional treatment under a NSW Government reform announced today by the Minister for Mental Health and Healthy Lifestyles, Kevin Humphries.

Delivering on a key commitment to increase specialised support for people with significant drug and alcohol problems, the NSW Government will commit \$1.8 million for new involuntary drug and alcohol treatment services at Royal North Shore Hospital and Bloomfield, Orange.

Mr Humphries said the establishment of the new statewide Involuntary Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program will increase assistance to severely substance dependent people who are at risk of serious harm and are unable to consent to treatment, particularly in cases where no other appropriate help is reasonably available.

"At the very heart of the NSW Government's mental health and drug and alcohol reforms is a commitment to helping some of the most marginalised and vulnerable in our communities," Mr Humphries said.

"Through the statewide implementation of the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Act we are reaching out to those who have lost the capacity to make decisions about their substance use and personal welfare, due to the severity of their addiction.

"This reform will help make it easier to provide treatment to people who have refused it when treatment is absolutely necessary to protect them from harm, and allow them to stabilise and rebuild their physical health.

"All too often, people in this situation bounce in and out of the health or justice systems, so we are making sure that in cases of severe substance dependence we have a modern and recovery-focused system that can help people end their addiction."

Mr Humphries said an assessment of the recently completed two year trial of the Involuntary Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program at Nepean Hospital found it had a wide range of benefits for patients including improved social relationships, reduction in mental health symptoms and a decreased likelihood of relapse following discharge.

"Through this program people can receive involuntary inpatient treatment for up to 28 days - or up to three months if they have alcohol-related brain injury - with ongoing support as they return to the community," Mr Humphries said.

The funding is in addition to \$10 million allocated for drug and alcohol rehabilitation services and programs to help people in NSW end their addiction and \$3.4 million for the NSW Opioid Treatment Program to increase access to treatment and enhance the quality of care provided for people with opioid dependence throughout the State.

Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, said the changes will also see voluntary outpatient aftercare in the community for up to six months.

“Providing this level of aftercare is an extremely important component in reducing the risk of relapse and adverse events following discharge from inpatient involuntary care, as well as restoring the person’s capacity to make decisions about their substance abuse and personal welfare,” Mrs Skinner said.