



Kevin Humphries MP

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Healthy Lifestyles

Minister for Western NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

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GROUND-BREAKING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE FOR NEW ENGLAND

Communities throughout New England will have increased access to mental health services under a ground-breaking trial program launched in Armidale today by the NSW Minister for Mental Health, Kevin Humphries, and Member for Northern Tablelands, Richard Torbay.

Mr Humphries said that through the *Rural Mental Health Emergency Transport Project* the region's Ambulance, Police and Health services will work together for the first time to provide faster and safer treatment to people with mental illness in an emergency situation.

Armidale Hospital will also be upgraded to a 'declared mental health facility' and receive additional staff and resources.

"Emergency situations involving people who may have a mental illness can be a complicated and time consuming process as it often involves a response by multiple agencies, such as health, police and ambulance services," Mr Humphries said.

"In New England it has also involved the police transporting people to the nearest declared mental health facility in Tamworth, which has often been difficult for both the police and for the patient who may need immediate treatment.

"Through this project we are breaking down the tyranny of distance and making it much easier for people and families throughout New England to get the help they need, when they need it."

The project will see people detained by police under the Mental Health Act and in need of urgent treatment handed over to Ambulance officers at facilities in Moree, Inverell, Glenn Inness, Narrabri and Gunnedah so that they can receive expert treatment en route to the nearest specialist mental health facility.

"Through this important initiative the region's police, ambulance and health services will work together to respond more quickly and effectively to mental health emergencies across Northern Tablelands and New England and ensure people have access to mental health treatment as soon as possible," Mr Torbay said.

"Importantly, we are also creating an additional regional hospital to which people detained under the Mental Health Act can be taken to receive a timely mental health assessment and immediate care."

Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Michael Gallacher, welcomed the initiative and said it would reduce police workload and allow them to return to other duties more quickly.

"As the first responders in an emergency, police play an important role in managing mental health emergencies and ensuring that the people they detain get the right care as quickly as possible," Mr Gallacher said.