



Kevin Humphries MP

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Healthy Lifestyles

Minister for Western NSW

MEDIA RELEASE

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MUMS AND KIDS MATTER

Young mothers with a mental illness will be given additional support so that their children can stay with them while they receive treatment in the community under a ground-breaking program launched today by the Minister for Mental Health, Kevin Humphries.

Mr Humphries said the \$12 million state-wide initiative, *Mums and Kids Matter*, builds on the successful HASI program and will ensure more mothers will not be separated from their children while they undertake their journey to recovery from their mental illness.

“The greatest measure of any government is what it does to look after its most vulnerable and marginalised residents, and few groups are more vulnerable than young mums living with a serious mental illness,” Mr Humphries said.

“We don’t want mums to be separated from their children and sent to hospital when they can receive care in the community, with their family. This program will give more women that chance.

“I strongly believe that wherever possible every mother has the right to be with their child and that mental illness should not be a barrier to mums being with their children on their path to recovery.

“Mothers with a mental illness are at risk of parenting difficulties, social isolation, hospitalisation, poverty, and homelessness. These issues also increase their child’s risk of developing a range of different health and social problems, which is why it is so important that we provide the right support for the whole family at this vulnerable time.

Through *Mums and Kids Matter* the organisation selected to run the program, Wesley Mission, will increase the number of mothers with serious chronic mental illness living in stable housing with their children with new high, medium and low packages of care and short term housing.

“By ensuring mums with a severe mental illness have access to affordable, safe and stable housing close to clinical mental health and rehabilitation services and support, they have a far greater chance of overcoming their illness and living fulfilling and successful lives in their communities with their children,” Mr Humphries said.

“This initiative also works to improve the mental health conditions of both the mother and the children to prevent hospitalisation, as well as the risk of homelessness, while also providing assistance to improve their social and economic outcomes.”

The CEO of Wesley Mission, the Rev Dr Keith Garner, said Wesley Mission was delighted to be delivering the Mums and Kids Matter program.

“Acute mental health problems, particularly among young mothers, need strategic and long-term solutions,” Dr Garner said.

“The genius of this program is that it deals with the complexities of mental health, provides ongoing support each step of the way, particularly at transition points, and draws together both community-based and clinical models of care. It is a whole of person, whole of family and whole of community response.”