



Jai Rowell MP

Minister for Mental Health
Assistant Minister for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 19 November 2014

NSW GOVERNMENT DELIVERS KEY IMPROVEMENTS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE

The rights of people across NSW undertaking treatment for mental illness are set to be strengthened, with a number of key legislative changes passed by NSW Upper House with unanimous support late last night.

The *Mental Health Act Amendment (Statutory Review Bill) 2014* comes as a major step in improving mental health care in NSW, ensuring the wishes of the individual are a principle consideration taken into account by clinicians administering treatment.

Minister for Mental Health Jai Rowell said the new laws, which will come into effect in July 2015, were the result of extensive consultation conducted across the state.

“These changes are a positive step for mental health care, and reflect the wishes expressed by key stakeholders during exhaustive consultation in drafting this legislation,” Mr Rowell said.

“We canvassed the views of over 500 people from the mental health community including peak consumer and carer groups, leading academics, people living with mental illness, their carers, family members and other mental health professionals.”

The amendments to the Act will mean that consumers will now be able to nominate up to two designated carers who will be able to access relevant information about their care. The changes also strengthen initial assessment processes, including requirements for clinicians to seek and consider the views of carers and family members.

“Mental illness affects many in our community, with around 30,000 admissions to in-patient units each year in NSW,” Mr Rowell said.

“We know that people with mental illness respond better to treatment and recover quicker when they are involved in the decisions relating to their care and with these amendments, our Mental Health Act now aligns with national and international trends towards a consumer-led approach to treatment.”

Among the key changes brought in by the legislation are;

- requirements that clinicians make every effort to take into account the consumers' views and wishes about their treatment to ensure the principles of recovery are supported,

- Increased safeguards that protect the rights of people with mental illness such as enhanced rights of young people undergoing treatment,
- Strengthened emergency mental health care by empowering more clinicians to undertake assessments – a measure which will save mental health consumers in country areas from arduous travel in seeking assessment of their mental health condition and treatment.
- Recognising the need for a consumer’s primary care provider to receive certain information.

“The NSW Government is committed to protecting the rights of those with a mental illness,” Mr Rowell said.

“We have already delivered on our promise to establish the NSW Mental Health Commission, and these amendments to a most important piece of legislation are another critical step forward in the NSW Government’s plan to improve the provision of mental health services for every person in the State.”