



Jai Rowell MP

Minister for Mental Health Assistant Minister for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES \$1.8 MILLION EXPANSION OF PIONEERING MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Minister for Mental Health Jai Rowell today announced \$1.8 million in NSW Government funding for the expansion of a pioneering mental health training and treatment program aimed at helping those living with complex personality disorders.

During a visit to one of the trial sites of the innovative ‘Project Air’ Strategy for Personality Disorders, Sutherland Hospital Mental Health Rehabilitation Unit, Mr Rowell announced \$600,000 in funding to be delivered this financial year as part of the NSW Government’s commitment to expand the successful program.

Mr Rowell said discussions were underway with a number of Local Health Districts around the state interested in hosting the further roll-out of the program, saying it had proven immensely successful in enhancing the treatment available for those affected by personality disorders.

“The expansion of ‘Project Air’ will significantly improve the capacity of health services to diagnose, manage and provide effective treatment for people with personality disorders,” Mr Rowell said.

Director of ‘Project Air’ Strategy for Personality Disorders, Professor Brin Grenyer, said the treatment of personality disorders was a considerable area of need within the state’s mental health sector.

“Approximately 6.5% of the Australian population has a diagnosable personality disorder, although the vast majority of these having previously gone undiagnosed,” Profesor Grenyer said.

“Of the roughly 33,000 admissions to NSW mental health units each year, around one in six are people with a diagnosis of personality disorder, and among people with very frequent hospital admissions for mental illness around 90% have a personality disorder diagnosis.

“The treatment of personality disorders is a real area of need. An evaluation conducted on this trial indicates that not only are frontline staff more confident in their treatment of these disorders, but that there are significant improvements in the mental health of those undergoing treatment.”

An assessment of the trial to date had indicated:

- Personality disorder presentations in Emergency Departments have significantly reduced by approximately 74%
- Personality disorder admissions and length of stays in hospitals have significantly reduced, effectively halving patient's length of stay in inpatient treatment,
- Family and carers have reported increased confidence, enthusiasm, and willingness to remain carers
- NSW Health staff have reported increased clinical skills, confidence and changed attitudes in treating personality disorders.

"The NSW Government is committed to improving our mental health system's capabilities in the treatment of those affected by personality disorders, and in improving the lives of those who are most affected by these often debilitating and socially isolating disorders," Mr Rowell said.

"This \$1.8 million investment by the NSW Government over the next two years to expand 'Project Air' as part of a longer term plan to extend this training across the state.

"This commitment also forms part of the NSW Government's \$115 million investment over three years to commence the implementation of the NSW Strategic Plan for Mental Health."

Minister Rowell was also joined at today's announcement by Member for Cronulla Mark Speakman and Liberal candidate for Miranda Eleni Petinos. Mr Speakman said that the program had provided more responsive treatment to local residents with complex mental health needs.

"Personality disorders can have a detrimental effect on the lives of those experiencing them, and those that care for them," Mr Speakman said.

"We have seen some impressive results locally from this trial and I can see some real potential for these results to be replicated elsewhere across the state."