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MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 31 August 2015

EMPOWERING MENTAL HEALTH CONSUMERS IN THEIR CARE

People recovering from a mental illness will be empowered to participate in decisions about their treatment with amendments to the Mental Health Act (2007) coming into effect today.

Minister for Mental Health Pru Goward said the amendments were a major step towards improving mental health care in NSW.

“These amendments give people confronting mental health challenges an important role in their treatment planning, bringing our Mental Health Act into alignment with national and international trends towards a person-centered approach to care,” Ms Goward said.

“We know that people with mental illness respond better to treatment and recover more quickly when they are involved in decisions relating to their care.”

Ms Goward said the views of the community, peak consumer and carer groups, mental health professionals, the NSW Mental Health Commission and the Mental Health Review Tribunal were all sought as part of the extensive consultation process.

“I want to acknowledge everyone, including former Ministers Kevin Humphries and Jai Rowell, whose leadership helped shape these important amendments which will help improve the delivery of mental health care in NSW,” Ms Goward said.

The key changes to the Act include:

- Supporting recovery principles by encouraging clinicians to take into account consumers’ views and wishes about their treatment
- Increasing safeguards that protect the rights of people with mental illness, such as enhanced requirements for young people with matters before the Mental Health Review Tribunal
- Strengthening emergency mental health care by empowering more clinicians to undertake assessments — to reduce travel time for involuntary assessments in rural and remote areas – and by requiring clinicians to seek and consider the views of carers, family members, treating health professionals and relevant emergency personnel when undertaking these assessments
- Allowing consumers to nominate up to two designated carers who will be able to access relevant information about their care
- Recognising the need for the consumer’s main care provider to receive information to assist with their care.

NSW Mental Health Commissioner John Feneley said the changes to the Mental Health Act put the views and wishes of people with a lived experience of mental illness and their carers at the centre of treatment and care.

“It is critical to respect the experience of people who live with mental illness, and to be guided by it as we work towards mental health reform. I am pleased that the government has updated the Act to reflect this approach,” Mr Feneley said.