

Media Release

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Pressure on acute in-patient beds a result of drastic under-funding of community based mental health services.

The highly regarded community mental health organisation, West Club, is under threat of funding cuts, which would make it non-viable. West Club provides vital social and recreational activities for people with mental illness in Penrith, Windsor and Katoomba.

It works in partnership with West Works, a successful small business that employs people with mental illness. Together they provide the mix of skill development, employment, support and recreation opportunities that are an essential part of recovery and rehabilitation for people with mental illness.

The Mental Health Co-ordinating Council (MHCC) which represents consumer, carer and service provider organisations, is very concerned at the threat to West Club. "West Club provides the sort of activities and support that are vital for people with mental illness" stated Ms Jenna Bateman, MHCC Executive Officer.

"This action is typical of the Carr government, which has neglected and under-funded mental health services generally and community based services in particular. Community mental health services provide the ongoing support, communication and care that helps people to understand and manage their illnesses and helps prevent further episodes of acute illness requiring inpatient treatment. Without this help many people with mental illness suffer repeated acute episodes, often termed "the revolving door syndrome."

"Inadequate support for community mental health organisations contributes to the drastic shortage of beds. The effect of this shortage has been evident for years. Unfortunately it has been demonstrated by a long line of tragedies, such as the recent situation of Awale Mohamed, a man in acute distress as a result of a psychotic illness, who tried to access treatment in a hospital Mental Health unit without success and shortly after tried to kill another person."

"The Carr government must increase resources for mental health services. It lags behind other states, particularly in spending on community based services. NSW spends 1.5% of its total mental health budget on community based services compared with Victoria, which allocates close to 10%. New Zealand spends 25% of their mental health budget on community based services."

"The system in NSW is in crisis and desperately needs more resources."

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