

MEDIA RELEASE

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Hiccup on Coalition's mental health policy – all good except on reopening of Callan Park.

Whilst the Coalition demonstrates their understanding that more funds are needed across the NSW mental health system, their new policy platform launched today, includes the outmoded proposal that Callan Park be reopened as a 400 bed rehabilitation facility.

The days of large institutions for people with mental health problems should be behind us. Research now tells us that people get better quicker if they are reconnected to family and friends and assisted into jobs and activities with their peers - not 'rehabilitated' in the unreal environment of an institution.

Jenna Bateman EO of the Mental Health Coordinating Council says, "The \$85 mill or so targeted for the reopening of Callan Park would be better spent ensuring people have high levels of support to manage their lives in the community. Support which can be increased and decreased as the persons illness demands. Have people forgotten what the term, 'institutionalised' means? It means taking away self determination and an individualised approach to care– both of which are fundamental to recovery."

"There is no doubt that a range of options needs to be available including restricted egress extended care places for those people who are unable to live safely in the community, however, NSW is a big place and these types of facilities or units need to be placed across the state, nearer to family and carers and nearer to the communities to which people will one day return. Callan Park is a long way from the rest of NSW."

"On the positive side the Coalition's platform on mental health does recognise the huge need for increasing services provided by community based NGOs. They have pledged a substantial \$70 mill to enhance the ability for NGOs to provide services to support carers, youth, suicide prevention initiatives, education, telephone support services, supported accommodation initiatives and vocational programs."

"The Coalition is making a real commitment to mental health in a range of areas MHCC would like to see progressed but please rethink the value in reopening Callan Park as against a more state – wide approach," stated Ms Bateman

For further comment contact:

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