

MEDIA RELEASE - MINISTER FOR HEALTH - 24 May 2004

More than \$31 million for Western Sydney Mental Health Package - first stage of \$241 million for new mental health beds and services across NSW

The Premier of NSW, Mr Bob Carr and Minister for Health Morris Iemma today announced the first stage of a \$241 million program that will see new mental health beds and specialised mental services open up across NSW over the next four years. The \$31.6 million Western Sydney Mental Health Package includes **29 new mental health beds**, two new **Psychiatric Emergency Care Centres** at Nepean and Liverpool Hospitals and **expanded mental health court liaison services**. The additional funding is part of the extra \$241 million allocated in April's mini-Budget for mental health over the next four years. "This is the first of a series of mental health packages that will open up more beds and provide new services over the next four years," Mr Carr said.

The extra \$31.6 million over the next four years would go towards:

- \$18.6 million for **29 new mental health beds**, including:
 - \$4.2 million for six acute beds and nine staff at Westmead Hospital to be opened in early June;
 - \$12.2 million for 20 new acute care beds at Cumberland Hospital in December;
 - \$2.2 million for three additional acute care beds and five staff at the Pialla Unit at Nepean Hospital.

- \$2 million to extend the successful **Mental Health Court Liaison** program to five new district court locations, including:

Manly; Blacktown; Wagga Wagga; Coffs Harbour; Nowra

- \$2 million to establish two pilot Psychiatric Emergency Care Centres at Nepean and Liverpool Hospitals and then a further \$9 million to extend the program into other areas where needed.

New Mental Health Beds

The new facilities will provide mental health beds in modern, purpose-built environments that are co-located with essential support services. They will expand the access to inpatient care for a range of patients including children and young adults, acutely unwell patients, older patients and those requiring long-term non-acute care.

Psychiatric Emergency Care Centres

For the first time in NSW, two pilot psychiatric Emergency Care Centres will be established at Nepean and Liverpool Hospitals. Mr Iemma said that \$2 million would be provided to put in place dedicated psychiatric teams in Emergency Departments to work with emergency clinicians and develop individual treatment plans. "A further \$9 million will then be allocated to expand the service across NSW into the areas of most need. "This initiative will provide patients with acute mental illnesses the emergency care and the specialist psychiatric assessment they need in a co-located facility."

Mental Health Court Liaison Service

The Court Liaison Service places qualified and experienced health professionals inside courts to advise on the best course of treatment for people showing signs of mental illness. It diverts mentally ill people from custody into community or hospital treatment, while still addressing community safety concerns.

A pilot Court Liaison Service commenced in 1999 at Central and Parramatta Local Courts. Its success led to the establishment of the NSW Community Court Liaison Service in 2002. The Service currently has nurses and psychiatrists operating in 14 local courts across NSW - seven in metropolitan courts and seven in rural courts.

During the first 18 months of operation of the Service across NSW;

More than 2,340 people were referred for assessment;

67 percent were determined to be suffering from a mental illness or disorder;

1,383 people were diverted from prison to community based mental health services.

Mr Lemma said that court diversion does not mean that criminal proceedings are necessarily discontinued. "Where custody is deemed appropriate, mental health services in remand correctional centres are in place to provide necessary treatment."

Mental Health Funding

The 2003/04 NSW State budget provided \$715 million for mental health services, an increase of \$90 million on the previous year, and more than double the amount spent in 1995 when this Government came to office.

The extra \$241 million boost to mental health funding over the next four years was announced in the April 2004 mini-budget.

NSW Health Media Contact 02 9391 9121 or 02 9214 9972