

Premier announces new plan for mental health and review for carers

The Premier of NSW, Mr Bob Carr, today announced a new whole-of-government approach to mental health services which will improve the co-ordination of prevention programs, community support schemes and emergency responses.

The Premier made the announcement during the Australian Social Policy Conference, which is examining the social policy challenges facing the Government and the community.

The new Interagency Plan for Better Mental Health includes practical measures to improve care and support for people suffering mental illness.

“The Government has developed a comprehensive plan for tough social problems like drug abuse and child protection and is now responding to challenging issues like mental illness,” Mr Carr said.

“The new plan is aimed at improving the delivery of mental health services, from initial diagnosis and treatment through to ongoing services.

“It is about a more efficient and co-ordinated Government approach to mental health,” Mr Carr said.

The plan sets out a framework for Health, Community Services, Housing, Education, Disability Services and Police to collaborate in the treatment and care of people with a mental illness.

It includes:

- The development of a Discharge Plan for patients which takes into account factors like a patient’s housing situation, whether they have children in need of care, medical appointments, social supports and contact numbers;
- My Health Record booklet for patients with chronic mental illness to help them monitor their treatment;
- Mental Health First Aid Training for health and welfare workers, who will learn how to respond to a patient threatening suicide, how to recognise the early signs of psychosis and how to refer a person with mental illness to the correct service;
- A trial of new approaches for young people with co-existing mental health and drug abuse problems; and,
- The development of a statewide protocol for mental health services, emergency departments, ambulance and police in a mental health emergency.

The Premier also announced a review of the 1999 Carers' Statement.

"New South Wales has around 750,000 carers. Most are women and many are juggling work, caring and family responsibilities.

"Ensuring all carers are recognised and supported is a high priority," Mr Carr said.

The review will contribute to a new carers' policy and will be led by NSW Health in conjunction with the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

It will:

- Develop a set of principles to underpin the Government's recognition and support for carers;
- Create a whole-of-government framework to recognise and support carers;
- Analyse demographic and other trends that will influence the number of carers in NSW and examine the changing context in which carers carry out their caring responsibilities; and,
- Examine best practice in carer recognition and carer support nationally and internationally.

In addition to these measures, the Carr Government will be consulting with families and experts over the coming months to develop a long-term plan for a sustainable disability service system.

"We have a good disability system but with changing demographics, increasing demand and growing expectations, there is widespread recognition of the need for reform," Mr Carr said.