



Tanya Davies
Minister for Mental Health

MEDIA RELEASE

Sunday, 22 July 2018

STATEWIDE SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING PERSONALITY DISORDERS

Adolescents, adults, and their families and friends, will have better access to mental health support for personality disorders through the expansion of specialised clinics and staff training across the State.

Minister for Mental Health Tanya Davies today announced an additional \$5.5 million over five years for the *Project Air Strategy* to ensure earlier diagnosis of personality disorders and help reduce time spent in hospital due to more tailored treatments.

“We are seeing this unique project significantly reduce presentations to emergency departments and shorten hospital stays, because the right help is getting to people faster,” Mrs Davies said.

The project is a collaboration between the NSW Government and the University of Wollongong and includes:

- Ongoing training for health staff on managing affected people and carers;
- The Gold Card Clinic initiative to help consumers move from emergency departments, to treatment in the community; and
- The establishment of ongoing resources for health professionals via the ‘Air Academy’ and online resources for families and carers.

‘*Project Air*’, which is already operational in 11 local health districts and one network, will be rolled out in the remaining LHDs of Nepean Blue Mountains, Southern NSW, Murrumbidgee and Hunter New England by 2020.

People experiencing a personality disorder - such as borderline, antisocial, narcissistic and obsessive-compulsive - represent about 25 per cent of mental health presentations to emergency departments and admissions to the State’s mental health inpatient units.

Treatment involves tailored evidence-based psychological therapy, to help the person understand their feelings and improve relationships with loved ones.

“Often these people arrive at the hospital in distress. With *Project Air*, they are assessed through what we call the Gold Card clinic to ensure targeted treatment and rapid follow-up,” Mrs Davies said.

Professor Brin Grenyer, the *Project Air Strategy* founder, said in NSW almost half a million people would meet diagnostic criteria for a personality disorder, with about 75,000 people in NSW actively seeking care at any one time.

“The disorder often first appears during the schooling years, peaks in the early 20s and 30s and can be very distressing for the person and others around them. It can significantly impact their relationships, work and study,” Professor Grenyer said.

This brings the NSW Government’s investment in the *Project Air Strategy* to more than \$11 million since 2011.

If you, or someone you know, needs crisis support phone Lifeline 13 11 14. For more information about the *Project Air Strategy*, visit www.projectairstrategy.org.

MEDIA: Elizabeth Williams | 0439 807 672