

Northern Mental Health Emergency Care Rural Access Program (24/7 Telehealth)



Health

In response to *Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW 2014-2024*, under the key direction; Increasing specialist clinical mental health services in the community, the NSW Government announced the establishment of a new 24/7 mental health resource hub with mental health professionals to support health workers in northern NSW using video conferencing technology.

The Northern Mental Health Emergency Care – Rural Access Program is collaboration between Hunter New England, Mid North Coast and Northern NSW Local Health Districts and is the first of its kind in NSW.

In line with the Government's commitment to improving the wellbeing of the community and ensuring better outcomes for people with mental illness, their families and carers, the Northern Mental Health Emergency Care Rural Access Program aims to facilitate timely access to mental health assessment and care for people living in rural and remote communities across the three local health districts.

These communities will have timely access to specialist mental health assessment at their local hospital.

This will negate their need to be transported, usually, long distances (usually by Ambulance and Police), away from their local support networks, to a mental health inpatient facility, for an assessment. Where safe and appropriate, they may be able to be cared for at their local hospital. Only patients requiring specialist mental health inpatient care will need be transported to these facilities.

This should also reduce the occasions in which emergency service partners (ambulance and police) will need to be involved in long distance transports. This means that these services will be available to respond to the needs of their communities.

The hub has been established in Newcastle and NMHEC-RAP commenced operating in August 2016. The service is being trialled in four pilot sites across the three local health districts – Muswellbrook (HNE), Kempsey (MNC), Grafton and Byron Bay (NNSW), commencing with:

- 24 hour access to specialist mental health consultation and advice to emergency department staff.
- Timely mental health assessments by experienced mental health professionals
- Advice on care planning, recommendations for care, support in monitoring and reviewing mental health consumers in the emergency department who are awaiting transfer or discharge.
- Comprehensive, contemporaneous, standardised clinical documentation in the local health district electronic medical record.

The service will be progressively rolled out to other smaller emergency departments across the three districts.

To learn more about mental health care reform in NSW visit

www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/reform

