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NEW MENTAL HEALTH UNIT PUTS PATIENTS ON ROAD TO RECOVERY

NSW Minister for Health and Deputy Premier Carmel Tebbutt has opened a new \$8.9 million non-acute mental health centre for the Hunter.

Ms Tebbutt and Minister Assisting the Minister for Health on Mental Health Barbara Perry joined Minister for the Hunter and Member for Newcastle Jodi McKay for the official opening of the Intermediate Stay Mental Health Unit in Newcastle today.

“The Intermediate Stay Mental Health Unit is a new 20-bed facility built on the historic James Fletcher Hospital campus,” Ms Tebbutt said.

“It will provide intensive, short-term rehabilitation in a therapeutic and supported environment and enable a transition for patients as they continue their recovery from the acute phase of mental illness.

“The new centre will allow for improved transition for patients who no longer require acute mental health treatment, but who need extra support and assistance to help sustain their recovery and prevent a relapse.”

The purpose-built unit, located on the corner of Church and Newcomen streets, includes 20 single bedrooms with ensuites, lounge and activity areas and courtyards, as well as kitchen and laundry facilities.

Clients will begin using the new unit from the end of November and will stay for up to six weeks.

Minister Perry said the new unit was the first of its type for Hunter New England Health and one of a number of non-acute inpatient units being delivered around NSW under the Government’s plan to boost non-acute inpatient services, improve access to care and improve outcomes for mental health consumers.

“This brand new facility is part of the Keneally Government’s increased investment in mental health care in the Hunter region and around NSW,” Ms Perry said.

“Hunter New England mental health services have also benefitted in recent years from the Mater campus redevelopment, which included the new 100-bed acute inpatient Mental Health Centre to replace inpatient services at the James Fletcher site.”

Inpatient units and outpatient services were relocated from James Fletcher Hospital to the new Mental Health Centre at the end of June 2009.



Minister McKay said the Intermediate Stay Mental Health Unit incorporates part of a convict-era brick wall unearthed during archaeological excavations on the site.

“Archaeological digs unearthed remnants of the original Church of England parsonage that occupied this section of the James Fletcher site until about 1902,” Ms McKay said.

“The convict-era wall is still visible as part of a landscaped courtyard off Church Street that is accessible to the public.

“I am very pleased that the site’s heritage significance has been a major consideration as part of establishing this new facility.

“Hunter New England Health has worked closely with a consultant archaeologist, heritage architects and the NSW Heritage Council in planning and constructing the new facility.”

Ms McKay said the NSW Government took the first steps in June this year to have the James Fletcher Hospital site listed on the State Heritage Register.

“The James Fletcher site holds a great deal of historical significance to Newcastle and should be protected for future generations,” Ms McKay said.

“That is why the NSW Government is working with the Hunter New England Area Health Service and the local community to have the site placed on the State Heritage Register.

Ms McKay said the new unit reaffirms the Government’s commitment to keeping the historic James Fletcher site in public hands and for use as a health facility.

The Hunter Institute for Mental Health, the Centre for Psychotherapy and the Mental Health Court Liaison Service are also located on the James Fletcher Campus.

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