

Thursday, 26th November 2015

Mental health changes good news for South Australians

South Australians will see significant benefit following today's announcement on mental health funding by Federal Health Minister Sussan Ley.

That's according to both the Adelaide PHN and the Country SA PHN which have jointly welcomed the decision.

"Everyone agrees that as a nation we must do better in the way we help people with mental health issues and I absolutely believe that this decision will deliver substantial improvements," said Adelaide PHN CEO Deb Lee.

"Administering mental health locally means we will be better able to address what are complex individual problems, services will be better integrated and we will be more reactive to local needs.

"We'll be able to innovate to make the system more responsive, more focussed and more effective."

Following a review of the mental health system, Minister Ley has decided to devolve administration and funding from the federal level to the 31 recently established PHNs Australia-wide.

The changeover will take effect on July 1, 2016.

South Australia's two PHNs – Adelaide PHN and Country SA PHN – began operating in July this year with the clear goal of improving health outcomes for their individual communities.

"While a lot of the detail has to be worked through, we are all aware of the vital importance of providing a continuity of care for everyone currently in touch with the system," said Country SA PHN CEO Kim Hosking.

"We have six months now to ensure the transition is seamless for our community.

"While mental health is an issue everywhere, in regional and rural areas it's made worse by fewer services and greater distances. The changes announced today mean we'll be able to do more to reduce that burden for people living outside of Adelaide.

"I congratulate the Minister for facing the problem and making a decision that will drive real improvements."

While PHNs will now play a much larger role in the mental health sector, they will not be delivering services. PHNs analyse the delivery of primary health services in their regions, identify areas for improvement and then, where required, commission other bodies to deliver the services needed.

“Adelaide PHN and Country SA PHN will continue to collaborate closely to ensure that while we’re both delivering the specific mental health services needed within our regions, we’re also making sure that there’s a high level of equity and coordination across the whole of South Australia,” Ms Lee said.

“People who live in our community don’t care about lines on a map – they just want better health services.”

Mental health provider information sessions are planned by the Adelaide PHN and Country SA PHN for late January 2016 to enable all prospective providers to be better informed of these changes.

Media enquiries: Jonathan Revitt, Michels Warren PR on 0412 639 179