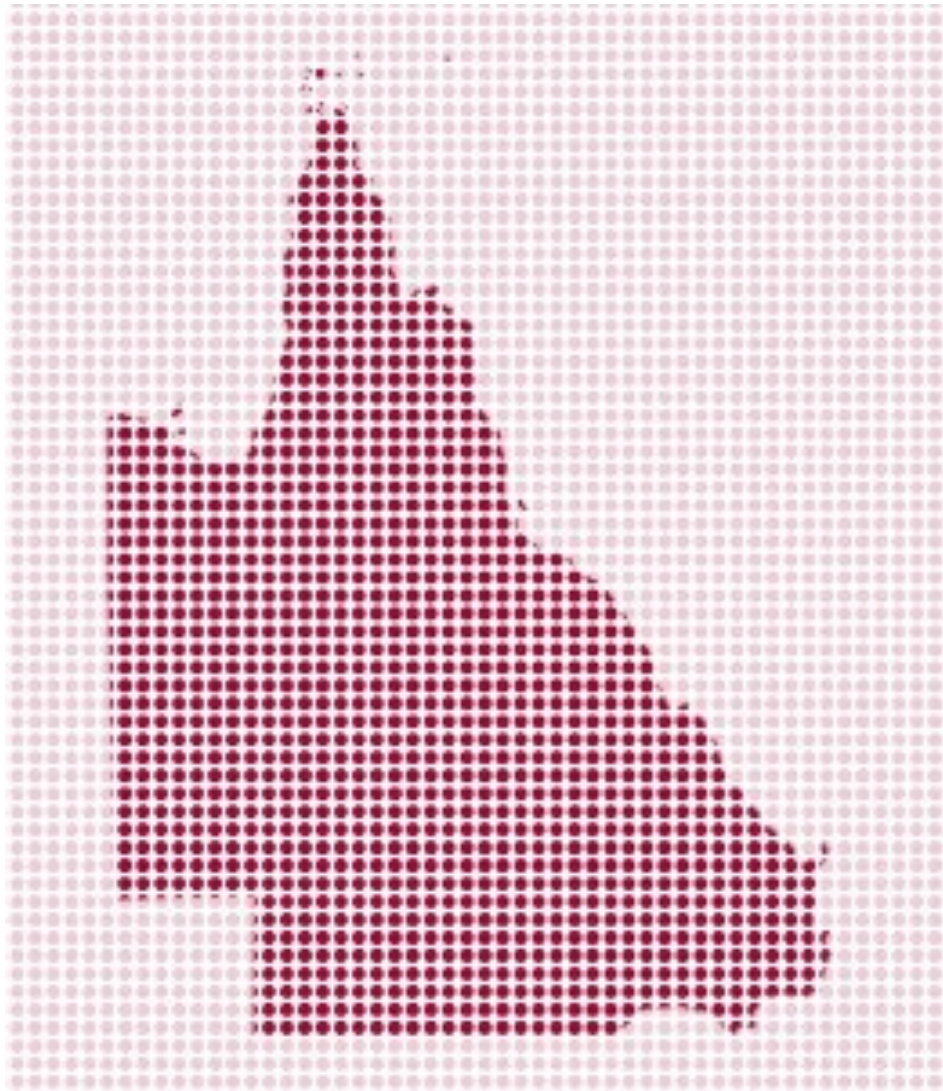


Rebuilding intensive mental healthcare for young people



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Rebuilding intensive mental healthcare for young people

A future Labor Government will expand services for young people with serious mental health issues, including the establishment of a Tier 3 facility with an integrated school in south-east Queensland.

The services will be based on the successful approach used to help young people overcome severe mental illness at the former Barrett Centre at Wacol for the past 20 years.

Labor's rebuilding of adolescent mental health services will also include an expanded range of services in Townsville to service families in northern and regional Queensland.

The need for more services

Mental health services for adolescents in Queensland need to expand. There is increasing evidence of an unmet need for services for mental illness, particularly among young people¹. Yet Premier Campbell Newman and the Liberal National Party have closed the only high-level (Tier 3) residential facility in Queensland – one with an integrated school – that provides intensive care for young people with serious mental health issues.

While community-based services situated close to where young people live and go to school are best suited for many mental health problems, more severe problems require more intensive care. For some such problems, short-term admission to an acute mental health hospital ward can be beneficial.

However, there is increasing evidence that placing children in an adult mental health ward is detrimental to their care and their safety. Some hospitals are now providing dedicated mental health beds for young people. While this can assist overcoming short-term crises, other longer-term care is required to help young people overcome severe mental health problems. This was the role of the Barrett Centre in Queensland.

The Barrett Centre was the only facility that offered specialist care for up to 12 months for both in-patients and day patients with severe mental health problems, including those at high risk of self-harm. The centre offered a specific-purpose school with a highly trained team of teachers and support staff providing recovery-orientated education integrated into individual treatment plans. The centre was also the only youth mental health facility in the state providing care to the maximum level (level six) within the Queensland Health Clinical Services Capability Framework (CSCF).

Unfortunately, Health Minister Lawrence Springborg decided to close the Barrett Centre in 2013 and has not replaced it.

Our solution

Consistent with the Queensland Plan for Mental Health 2007-2017² and the report of the Expert Clinical Reference Group³ on the Barrett Centre, Labor will build a new facility to replace the ageing buildings inappropriately located on the grounds of the secured adult mental health facility at Wacol.

The facility will offer up to 22 beds and a day program for a further 20 patients. Previous plans for a new centre at Redlands will be reviewed to consider the best option for the site of the new facility.

The new centre will have both step-down accommodation for graduated independent living and family accommodation to ensure adolescents can effectively return home as part of their recovery.

As well as building a new Tier 3 facility in south-east Queensland, Labor will provide expanded day services in a number of locations and will review the role of Assertive Mobile Youth Outreach Services and the Tier 2 sub-acute residential programs currently proposed by the Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service.

There is also a need to consider the care of young adults aged between 18 and 24 with developmental issues that may make adolescent-focused mental health programs more appropriate than adult mental health services.

Labor acknowledges the important role of community organisations in providing medium-term supported accommodation and care programs for young people with mental health and drug and alcohol problems. There is scope within the Queensland Plan for Mental Health to expand the range of these services, in partnership with local hospital and health services.

Labor proposes to expand the number of acute mental health hospital beds for adolescents and the associated adolescent community residential facility in Townsville, to service families in northern and regional Queensland. This residential facility will accommodate young patients with severe mental illness as they transition to and from the new Barrett Centre. It will also support local families from northern Queensland to ensure adolescent patients discharged from hospital have a local step-down care option before returning home and accessing day programs.

Benefits

The Barrett Centre offered a model of care that included residential multidisciplinary recovery-orientated treatment and rehabilitation of up to 12 months, with an integrated, specific-purpose school. This program also offered a flexible day program for those young people unable to function in a regular secondary school but able to live at home.

For adolescents up to the age of 17 years at high risk of self-harm and suicide, the Barrett Centre was a proven model of care that saved lives. The Barrett Centre was the children's intensive care ward for mental illness in Queensland. It is an essential component of a statewide mental health service for young people with different levels of severity and disability in their illness.

LNP turns back on mental health services

The Newman LNP Government closed the Barrett Centre at the end of 2013 without providing an equivalent level of service at an alternative location, as recommended by the Expert Clinical Reference Group and agreed by the West Moreton Hospital and Health Service⁴.

The LNP has:

- failed to adequately consult with parents, patients and staff of the Barrett Centre in relation to the change in services to vulnerable young people
- failed to provide the promised "wrap-around care". Three Barrett patients have taken their own lives since the closure of the centre
- reduced funding for public community health services
- cut grants to non-government organisations providing specialist health services in the community
- demonstrated an inability to properly manage specialist health services, particularly with regard to mental health.

Our commitment

A future Labor Government will build a new residential facility in south-east Queensland for young people with serious mental health issues, including an integrated specific-purpose school.

Labor will also expand services to co-located step down and transition accommodation and associated services in Townsville for young people in northern and regional Queensland.

Endnotes

¹AIHW (2013) *Mental health services in brief 2013*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. [Accessed December 2013] <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129544726>

²Queensland Government (2008) *Queensland Plan for Mental Health 2007-2017*. Brisbane: Queensland Government. [Accessed December 2013] http://www.health.qld.gov.au/mentalhealth/abt_us/qpfmh/08132_qpfmh07.pdf

³Expert Clinical Reference Group. *Barrett Adolescent Strategy. Proposed Service Model Elements – Adolescent Extended Treatment and Rehabilitation Services*. 2013. Unpublished.

⁴West Moreton Hospital and Health Service. *Expert Clinical Reference Group Recommendations. Barrett Adolescent Strategy*. July 2013 [Accessed December 2013] <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/westmoreton/docs/bac-recommendations-201307.pdf>



Queensland Labor was founded under the shade of the Tree of Knowledge in Barcaldine in 1891. Since then, we have remained the party of equality, opportunity, fairness and reform. We will listen to the community to build a better Queensland.