

NEWS RELEASE



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Frustration grows at funding silence

Hundreds of people living with mental health issues in the Top End may face a reduction in much-needed support if the Australian Government does not commit to funding crucial programs, according to a local mental health service.

TEAMhealth is the leading provider of community mental health services in the Northern Territory, and supports more than 400 people and families dealing with mental health challenges.

TEAMhealth Chief Executive Officer Helen Egan is becoming fed up with the Australian Government's silence about funding for programs from 1 July next year.

The organisation offers a range of support services including helping with day-to-day living, recovery, residential support, personal mentors, respite, home care and other family and youth services in the Darwin region, Katherine and the Top End.

"About 30 per cent of TEAMhealth program funding is uncertain beyond 30 June 2015 as a result of the Australian Government delays," Ms Egan said. "I expect some staff will come back from Christmas holidays worried they won't have a job six months into the New Year. If we don't have a contract, our funding is at risk."

Ms Egan has called on the Australian Government to provide two years' funding surety to key programs before Christmas. Last year the organisation had formal confirmation of a further 12 months of funding only two weeks before the start of the 2014 financial year.

The call comes after a national survey of community mental health organisations found funding uncertainty is impacting badly on services.

"The Australian Government has to provide surety of funding to enable organisations such as TEAMhealth to support the vulnerable people in our community," she said. "Such late notice and uncertainty has a huge impact on staff and the people we help."

Ms Egan said contributing to the Australian Government's silence on continued funding was the work still to occur on integrating some mental health services with the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and no announcement of the outcomes for tender submissions made by TEAMhealth and other organisations since July this year. Tender outcomes are urgently needed as funding for TEAMhealth's Family and Youth Services program finishes at the end of February 2015.

The program provides early intervention and education services to families and young people in Darwin and the Top End. Funding uncertainty is putting programs at risk for 60 people and families with mental health issues.

Contact

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