



# MI Fact Sheet Series

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING MENTAL ILLNESS

## The adult mental health system in the Northern Territory

### General Information

- Public and private, government and non-government, and hospital and community elements comprise the Northern Territory Mental Health System.
- The Territory government is the major provider of acute services for people with serious mental illness
- The Department of Health and Community Services Mental Health Division oversees provision of public mental health services. Services are primarily delivered by Mental Health Services located at Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy in a multidisciplinary team approach
- There is also a number of statewide, regional and specialist services, for example, the Frangipani Buddies – Post natal depression support group, Child & Adolescent Team, Forensic Team and Top End Mental Health Consumers Organisation
- Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation Support Services are also provided in Top End Area Mental Health Services
- Services in remote areas are often provided by visiting specialists or by consulting professionals in urban regions.

### Adult Mental Health Services

#### Hospital Inpatient Services

- **Acute Inpatient Services** provide voluntary and involuntary short-term management during an acute phase of mental illness until sufficient recovery allows effective treatment in

a community-based setting. Many units are located within general hospitals. There are two in the Northern Territory, at Darwin and Alice Springs

- **Secure/Extended Care Inpatient Services** provide a safe, supportive place for people with a serious mental illness whose behaviours may put themselves or others at risk. Their purpose is to provide a bed-based intensive treatment and care to clients who have unremitting and severe symptoms that inhibit their capacity to live in the community. These facilities can manage clients on an involuntary basis.

### Community-based services and teams

- **Top End Mental Health Services**
  - **Tamarind Centre** provides a 24 hour service which assesses people for hospital admission and referral to the appropriate Community Mental Health Clinic. This service provides treatment and support including case management for adults and young people 18 years old and over with mental illnesses. Services include consultation and liaison with other treatment agencies, referrals to other specialist agencies or services, specialised rehabilitation, assistance with living skills and crisis management. Consultation and support for families and mental health education and resource information are provided
- **Community Mental Health Services** provide assessment, treatment, consultancy, continuing care and case management.

- **Inpatient and specialist health units** are residential services for people with serious mental illness and major psychosocial disabilities, which assist in preparation for community living.

### Private psychiatric services

- Although General Practitioners (GPs) are generally in the private sector, in practice they form part of the public mental health system
- Private GPs are often the first point of contact for people with mental health problems. GPs may be more accessible than mental health specialists, likely to know about local support services and able to offer ongoing general medical treatment
- People with mental illness treated by Mental Health Services will most often be discharged to the care of GPs in their local community as soon as is practically possible. This makes having a relationship with a good GP very important
- The most common way of seeing a private psychiatrist is through a referral from a GP, which allows the Medicare rebate to be claimed. (Fees vary, and some psychiatrists bulk bill). Private psychiatrists may not always be accessible, especially in rural areas
- Private psychiatrists mainly provide outpatient services from their consulting rooms or inpatient services to private hospitals. They may have specialist interests (e.g. working with particular age groups or disorders, and using specific therapies)
- Private psychiatrists and GPs may work together with case managers and others in developing a management plan

# The adult mental health system in the Northern Territory continued...

## Psychiatric Disability Rehabilitation and Support Services (PDRSS)

A range of services provides employment placement, support, information, rehabilitation services and family respite. Some are run by not for profit organisations with government funding. Typically, these services assist people to maximize their recovery through skills development and practical assistance in housing, employment, finance etc, as well as offering social supports and networks.

- **ARAFMI** (Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill) provides rehabilitation and support services including Pete's Place (day program) in Millner as well as supporting family and friends of people with a mental illness. Services include carer education courses and advocacy services. Support workers are available in two locations:  
Darwin 8948 1051  
Alice Springs 8953 1467
- **Top End Association for Mental Health** (TEAM Health) provide a number of psychosocial rehabilitation services for people with mental illness, including information, referral, accommodation options, and practical life-skills rehabilitation

- **Top End Mental Health Consumers Organisation** (TEMHCO) provides mutual support, systems advocacy and social events for people with a mental illness
- **Employment services** of both state and commonwealth departments provide employment placement and support to people with a mental illness. For example, in Supported Employment, a job coach may assist people in a job and adjusting to the environment, so that people can return to work at their own pace
- **Mental Health Association of Central Australia** is a non-government organisation that offers support and advocacy for people with a mental illness.

## Useful references

- Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia  
[www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au](http://www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au)
- Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria  
[www.mifellowship.org](http://www.mifellowship.org)
- Top End Mental Health Services  
08 8999 4988  
[www.health.nt.gov.au](http://www.health.nt.gov.au)
- Top End Association for Mental Health (TEAM Health)  
08 8981 4128  
[www.teamhealth.asn.au](http://www.teamhealth.asn.au)
- Top End Mental Health Consumers Organisations (TEMHCO)  
08 8999 4909
- Alice Springs Mental Health Services Community Team  
08 8951 6930
- Katherine Mental Health Services After Hours Emergency  
08 8973 9211
- Mental Health Association of Central Australia  
08 8952 3311
- National Alliance of the Mentally Ill (USA)  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- NT ARAFMI  
Association of relatives and friends of the mentally ill Inc.  
08 8942 2711

## Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia fact sheets

Mental health legal framework  
in Northern Territory

What can friends and family do to help  
a person experiencing mental illness?

Family and carer supports and services