

Transcript of 612 4QR
Rebecca Levingston interviewing Lawrence Springborg 6 August 2013

So it is true that some time by early 2014 that centre will be closing as we actually come up with a range of new options to actually deliver those services to people closer to their own home, um, or right at - in their own home town so that - but we do understand that there will need to be acute, um, inpatient type options for youth. At the moment you've only got one and that's at the Barrett and they've done an exceptionally good job. It's an ageing facility, won't be able to function much beyond this year because it's in the middle of an adult mental health facility which is going to be expanded and, of course, that carries with it some risks. And also an expert clinician panel will be made up of clinicians from within Queensland, and also outside of the State, plus a resident and a resident's parent or a former resident's parent who will be providing advice to us. And the other thing about it is it's going to be auspiced in the future youth mental health in Queensland under State wide children's health service which is the statewide body to look after children's health, so we can actually make sure we get a statewide approach to this.

So just to be clear Minister, come the end of 2013 the Barrett Adolescent Centre will close?

Probably early - well we expect to have the options available to people in early 2014 and the transition will start sometime in the early part of 2014 as we build up services in other areas around the State.

And will you guarantee that there will be services in other parts of the State that provide residential care ...

Absolutely...

... because I think that's what I'm hearing from the patients that I have spoken to, and the parents that I've spoken to, that this is not about acute care, this is not about trauma when a teenager attempts suicide, this is about the long term care plan?

Absolutely.

So - so just - sorry, to be clear, will you guarantee that there will be services operating that offer inpatient care for teenagers in Queensland before Barrett shuts?

That's the whole point of this is to actually leave no one who is currently a patient or resident there, and those that are hopefully on, you know, that are waiting on the list so that they can have services closer to their own home and we're allocating an additional two million dollars for that. And that's why we've got an expert clinician panel and also a former resident and a parent who is also guiding the experts along the way because I'm very keen to make sure that we can provide the service across Queensland. And that's why I put on hold the closure of Barrett when I became the Minister. We understand these young people have got very, very complex mental health care needs and that would involve that they have inpatient or very supported residential requirements around the State and including working with Education Queensland to make sure that they have the education plans that are necessary as well.

Yeah because that's the other part of this - I will get to the school in just a moment - but how many inpatient facilities are you envisaging in Queensland?

Well, basically what we have at the Barrett Youth Adolescent Mental Health Facility at

the moment is 15 beds. They're not always completely occupied, um, there has been place times past where they haven't been, but obviously it doesn't meet the needs for children with these complex needs around Queensland and what we have to do is to look at the options which can ensure that all of those young people can either be accommodated locally because - and a range of them will come from that local area or within their own community and there has to be inpatient equivalent support for all of them, and hopefully additional young people around Queensland.

So you said that broad statement about providing the services...

That's right.

... but how many inpatient facilities will exist in Queensland? What's the plan?

Well we'll be taking - we will be taking the advice of the expert panel who's actually indicating to us whether we need to have more inpatient beds or whether these young people can be supported in residential accommodation in their own local community with the experts in more of a homely type environment, so that's the sort of thing that's being worked through at the moment. Okay it's being finalised. I'm giving you the broader picture about how this is going to work, ah that is, that we are no longer going to have just the focus being at the Barrett where, like, if you've got an issue in Rockhampton or Cairns or Townsville, or wherever the case may be, your option is Barrett. It needs to be close to you but, of course, for the young people in south east Queensland they will need to have a facility similar to this, or supported accommodation very similar, with very high level support very close to their own home town.

Lawrence Springborg is my guest, the Minister for Health in Queensland, just discussing broadly the plan for adolescent mental health care in Queensland. You're listening to 612 ABC Brisbane and ABC local radio Queensland and my name is Rebecca Levingston. In terms of acknowledging, ah, the situation for parents, I mean you heard the anxiety from Angela...

Yes. Yes yes.

... tonight. The staff and patients that I have spoken to as well have indicated that this last couple of months has been a difficult time for them. At what point will you be speaking directly to those staff members and including the people who are part of the school that's on site at the Barrett Centre?

Yeah. Well can I just touch on the isolated issue first. Certainly as the new Cairns Base Hospital is built and opened there will also be some options there for young people with regards to inpatient care, and also in Townsville, but I think we need to understand is often once you go past that acute episode it's about assisting the young person to be to be able to, you know, build their confidence, their life skills, and to give them support outside of that environment but in a very supportive way. Now, of course, as a part of this transition, as would have happened with the closure of Barrett and movement to Redlands, there will no doubt be considerations for staff and how they're going to relocate and reorganise within the system as I understand West Moreton Hospital and Health Service will be undergoing that particular process with the staff. Now that would be happening now or under the previous plan by the previous government as they planned to move that facility to elsewhere in south east Queensland.

So is that a definite that there will be a facility at - at - in the Redlands?

No, the previous government's proposal was to close the Barrett Adolescent Facility and to put one in the Redlands. I indicated when I became Minister I didn't like that idea because I felt not enough consideration had happened. We needed to look at the whole issue whether we should have one facility or whether we should look at having those services broken down across Queensland so that we could deliver services across the State, not just in one consolidated area. So, no, that won't be going ahead per se as in the major development but it may very well be possible as a part of this that, you know, smaller residential type options with that acute, um, support, um, in various areas are available to people closer to their own home whether it be in Ipswich, on the north side of Brisbane, Gold Coast, you name it, and also scattered throughout Queensland. And the finer details to the way that's going to be worked out just - it's going through now; as I indicated we've got probably around about another 7 to 8 months before it's completely formalized, and that's been done in consultation with this expert panel. I'm not on the expert panel, but I'm very confident that - what's been put in place.

All right so 7 to 8 months before you finalise the plan, is that the point at which you'll be able to tell Queenslanders 'look, this is where these centres will be located'?

Absolutely, and where the options are. An additional 2 million dollars has been put into it over and above the money which is currently allocated so we believe that that will be able to not only properly have facilities and support for these young people with complex needs but to accommodate additional young people as well who have these care needs. But, I think you've been fairly raising this issue over the last couple of weeks. We wanted to be in a position to give you, and those that are concerned that have been talking to you, some guidance about what's being suggested because we are aware of the importance of this facility, that it was always going to close. Previously I put that on hold but we want to actually say this is the proposal, it's now being worked through, um, this is the idea behind it, we'll have a much clearer picture by the latter stage of this year and the final details around it will be the early part of next year. Where are we, in August now, so we're probably looking in that 6-odd months down the track.

Lawrence Springborg is my guest, Minister for Health in Queensland. And Minister I very much appreciate you coming on the program tonight and giving us the broader picture. I look forward to speaking to you again in detail as the plan progresses.