

Closing the gap

Toronto Private Hospital increases capacity and access to mental health services for Hunter residents



A critical shortage of psychiatrists in the NSW Hunter region has created demand for more mental health services and innovative ways to provide them. Toronto Private Hospital, located in Toronto on Lake Macquarie NSW, has introduced a number of mental health services to provide the local community with a variety of options to suit their lifestyles and mental health needs.

Previously, local residents had limited options when considering mental health inpatient treatment. When Lingard Private Hospital, located in Newcastle, introduced a cardiac ward, their large mental health unit, known as the Woodlands Ward, and their out patient programs, needed a new

home. Lingard and Toronto Private collaborated with local mental health specialists and their own psychiatric team, leading to the conclusion that in the best interest of the community, the services would be relocated to Toronto Private in October 2013. A \$2 million redevelopment project ensured that the new Woodlands Ward would provide patients with a modern, spacious and tranquil facility.

"Mental illness continues to cause considerable distress and disability for individuals, impacting on the entire community. Toronto Private Hospital has been working collaboratively with local psychiatrists and mental health organisations to ensure our services are meeting local needs," said Andrew Mereau,

chief executive officer at Toronto Private Hospital.

"The opening of the inpatient mental health and day therapy units have provided increased capacity and access for patients in the Hunter."

Now with 25 beds, the voluntary Woodlands Ward is run by specialist psychiatrists, Dr Allan White, Dr Catherine Faehrmann, Dr Ian Fowler and Dr Cynthia Parker, who have developed a variety of well researched therapeutic programs, groups and activities, based on best practice principals.

Toronto Private Hospital recently commenced a new service for patients suffering from treatment resistant anxiety and depression - the Mood and Anxiety Assessment Program.

"The program has been established to support general practitioners by providing a comprehensive clinical assessment service for patients with acute or chronic mood and/or anxiety disorders.

"General practitioners can refer patients with mood or anxiety symptoms where initial treatment has been unsuccessful or hampered by complicating factors," Mr Mereau said.

"The combination of our services is another step towards ensuring the Hunter community gets the best possible care from a well trained and an appropriately resourced mental health unit." PH