A new era dawns for mental health

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- Represents significant mental health reform in WA
- Former Labor leader Eric Ripper to drive implementation
- Permits tele-psychiatric assessment and examination for regional areas
- Rights and recognition established for carers of people with mental illness

For the first time, the rights of people experiencing mental illness and the strengthening of family and carer involvement in treatment decisions is now enshrined, with the passing in State Parliament of the Mental Health Bill 2013.

Mental Health Minister Helen Morton said the Bill gave families and carers of people living with mental illness the right to be kept informed and involved in the treatment and care of the person they were supporting.

“This translates into a genuine say in treatment, support and discharge planning for families and carers,” Mrs Morton said.

The Bill, drafted after years of extensive consultation with carers, consumers and clinicians, provides:

- greater recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culturally appropriate treatment
- extra safeguards specifically for children experiencing mental illness
- a new Charter of Mental Health Care Principles to guide and set expectations for mental health services
- new levels of rights protection through the Mental Health Tribunal, the WA Chief Psychiatrist, the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office, and the new Mental Health Advocacy Service.

To enable a smooth transition, there will be an implementation period of about 12 months before the new legislation commences. Overseeing its implementation is a reference group chaired by former Labor Treasurer and Opposition leader Eric Ripper.

Pilot projects have already started, including:

- a trial of shorter timeframes for Mental Health Review Board hearings
- notifying family members and carers when a person is involuntarily admitted
- treatment, support and discharge plans

“The Bill represents real change, practical and transparent safeguards and, most importantly, the greater genuine involvement for families and carers in the treatment of their loved ones,” the Minister said.

“I am proud to deliver the commitment made in 2012 and congratulate all involved for their contribution to this successful outcome.”

Fact File

- The Mental Health Bill 2013 was introduced to State Parliament on October 23, 2013 and will replace the Mental Health Act 1996
- 1,300 written submissions helped inform the drafting of the Bill
- The Mental Health Bill Implementation Reference Group, chaired by Eric Ripper, oversees the implementation process
- It includes people with experience of mental illness, families and carers, clinicians and representatives from non-Government organisations and advocacy groups
- For more information, visit [http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au](http://www.mentalhealth.wa.gov.au)

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