



POLICE ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PO Box A1097, Sydney South, NSW 1232

PHONE: (02) 9265 6777 FAX: (02) 9265 6789

EAGLENET 57071

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Police Training and Mental Illness

The Police Association of NSW today welcomed the announcement by the State Government to provide all frontline police officers with a one-day course in mental health training.

The Mental Health Intervention course, to be run by the NSW Police Force and NSW Health, will be the first of its kind in Australasia.

A team of eight officers and nurses will travel to every police local area command in the state to deliver the training, which has been three years in the making.

Police Association President, Scott Weber said, "This training and education initiative is encouraging. As police officers, and often the first responders at incidences, many of the people we interact with have experienced a mental illness. Police deal with about 100 mentally ill people each day and this number continues to grow rapidly.

When someone with a mental health condition comes into contact with the police, either as a victim, witness or offender, they are often in acute distress. This can make it difficult to communicate effectively with them or assess any additional support needs, which can escalate a crisis situation even further.

Persistent stigma surrounds mental health, and the community as a whole needs to increase their understanding and challenge stereotypes. Better understanding means better interaction and better outcomes for all.

Investing in appropriate ongoing training helps ensure all police officers attain a level of mental health awareness.

Training in interacting with the mentally ill is vital to better equip police to respond to people with mental health problems effectively and appropriately.

However, it is no substitute for proper resources, funding and support for mental health services — police are not medical practitioners.

Failure to provide these resources inevitably results in more people with mental health conditions interacting with police and entering the criminal justice system. When this happens it represents a failure of society as a whole with potentially devastating consequences.

Mentally ill people, their families and all of us in our communities, deserve better."

Media contact: Alison McLaughlin, 0414 918 470

PRESS RELEASE