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LINE IN SAND ON MENTAL HEALTH

“Mental health consumers have drawn a line in the sand after recent government attacks on their quality of life” said JA spokesperson Brett Collins.

“Patients under state control have had their social interaction reduced, and right to smoke removed. These vulnerable and isolated citizens, to whom the state owes a special obligation, are extremely distressed and have asked for community assistance,” said JA spokesperson Michael Poynder.

The patients at Long Bay Hospital are now locked up at 3.30pm instead of 9pm, to cut costs, although all professional advice is that seclusion of these people will cause mental illness.

Additionally, all mental patients under the Health Department will lose access to the legal drug tobacco. Eighty percent smoke - a pleasure they have controlled since European settlement.

“This is a disgusting example to the rest of the community of bullying of dependent people. It is like the removal of all-day visits from the mothers of Emu Plains. They need to have their arses kicked” said Mr Collins.

“The ultimate hypocrisy is that the Federal government nominated mental health as a top priority with an increase of \$1.8 billion over 5 years,” said Mr Collins. Premier Iemma said on his appointment (8/05) that mental health was a “light on the hill.” “If I am in this job for a reasonable time and I can’t point to progress in these areas I will judge myself to have failed”.

“Mental health service providers, psychiatrists and nurses across Australia have joined the defence of these most vulnerable citizens. The Public Interest Advocacy Centre has been briefed for legal action. The patients call on the media to enter the institutions with Justice Action, and talk with them” said Mr Poynder.

Today the Right to Choose Alliance, comprising organisations across Australia has launched its website <http://www.righttochoosealliance.com.au> The statements of the NSW Nurses Association and former Director of Forensic Psychiatry for Queensland, Dr Bruce Westmore are attached to the Justice Action website <http://www.justiceaction.org.au>

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