



THE HON MARK BUTLER MP
Minister for Mental Health and Ageing

SENATOR THE HON KATE LUNDY
Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister

MEDIA RELEASE

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Improved and Expanded Mental Health Services for Survivors of Trauma and Torture

Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler, and Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Senator Kate Lundy, today announced improved and expanded mental health services are now available to refugees arriving in Australia who have experienced trauma and torture.

The new Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) consolidates existing mental health services into one seamless program to assist refugees successfully settle in Australia.

The Gillard Government will provide \$55 million in funding to the PASST over the next four years and almost \$300,000 funding to the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma for information and training resources to support GPs in the delivery of care to refugees who have experienced torture and trauma.

"In many cases refugees have suffered the brutality of torture and other traumatic experiences in their countries of origin, while fleeing or while living in refugee camps," Mr Butler said.

"Together, these two measures will help people struggling to cope with the effects of such experiences to recover and rebuild new lives in Australia."

Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Senator Lundy, said the consolidated program would ensure greater consistency in the delivery of torture and trauma services for refugees.

"Australia leads the world in the provision of settlement services and these changes will ensure new refugees receive the care and support they need to successfully build a new life in Australia," Senator Lundy said.

"Given the hardships many humanitarian entrants overcome, they display remarkable resilience in rebuilding their lives and contributing to Australian society."

The consolidated PASTT combines short term counselling services previously funded through the Department of Immigration and Citizenship with longer term assistance available through the Department of Health and Ageing into one seamless service.

"This removes the need to transfer clients between different government agencies ensuring they receive continuity of care and improved linkages with other mainstream mental health and health services," Mr Butler said.

An executive member of the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma, Mr Paris Aristotle said that "Australia now has one of the most extensive and effective programs to care for refugees who were tortured and traumatised anywhere in the world".

"These two measures will provide people who have survived horrific human rights violations with the support they need to overcome their trauma and establish a brighter future in safety and with dignity" Mr Aristotle said.

PASTT will provide counselling services and a range of other assistance to more than 5,000 individuals and their families per year. It will also assist other services working with refugees through the provision of training, secondary consultation and wider health network development.

Services provided through the new consolidated service include:

- direct counselling and related support;
- specific services to assist children and young people;
- education and training to mainstream health and other services;
- rural, regional and remote outreach services to enable torture and trauma survivors to gain access to comparable services outside metropolitan areas; and
- development of resources to support and enhance provision of specialist counselling and related support services.

"The Government is delivering on its ongoing commitment to continually improve the range and quality of mental health services available to all Australians, particularly for some of the newest and most vulnerable members of our community," Mr Butler said.

Through this year's Budget, the Gillard Labor Government is delivering \$2.2 billion in new measures - the single largest investment in mental health services in this nation's history.

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