

NEWS



Appeal for help: Rallying support for mental health care funding in Cairns are (from left) Bruce Rompton, Christine Shadforth, Sam Smith, Adrienne Hicks, Bill Crawford, Sue Ponsford, Tony Palastin, Andrew Smith and Suzanne Petarkin. Picture: TOM LEE

### Tableland calls own tune on TV reception

TABLELANDS Regional Council is telling the Federal Government it is not interested in its digital TV service for remote areas with poor reception. Speewah and Chillagoo are considered black spots where the council operates self-help re-transmission facilities. With the national switch to digital from analogue broadcasting under way, the council had a choice of going along with the

Government's Viewer Access Satellite Service or upgrading its own facilities. The council decided there were too many pitfalls in the Government scheme. Mayor Tom Gilmore said the council was moving towards an upgrade at Speewah and Chillagoo and would be talking to other affected communities as well. A small levy on households has been mooted to fund the upgrades.

# Mental health service crisis

HEARING voices and spiralling into psychotic episodes, Sam Smith says she and her husband had no idea how to deal with her mental illness before finding help with a local service. But now the Smiths are among hundreds of carers and people with mental health issues who say they have nowhere to turn after the Cairns Mental Health Carers Support Hub closed its doors due to lack of funding. "Everybody is traumatised," Wellways and carers' hub project officer Adrienne Hicks said. "They feel very vulnerable."

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ment that says it is committed to mental health and supporting carers would take away \$160,000 from this outstanding service," he said in parliament. "It is a disgrace." Since opening in October 2009, the support hub has provided support and referrals for families caring for someone with mental illness. Mrs Hicks said the service had proved successful with the number of patients utilising the service tripling since it opened. The Smiths say the system of mental

**“Everybody is traumatised ... they feel very vulnerable”**  
- Mental Health carer  
Adrienne Hicks

Mrs Hicks says she will continue to rally for the vital service, backed by Member for Mulgrave Curtis Pitt and Federal Member for Leichhardt Warren Entsch. Mr Entsch said the funding cut to the vital service would cost lives. "It is absolutely crazy that a Govern-

health care in the Far North is "barely adequate" and that they will now be lost without the hub. "Until we found this service, you felt alone," Andrew Smith said. "You don't realise how many other people are out there dealing with the exact same things I was."

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