

Media Release

4 June 2021

‘PAT’ OUTREACH SERVICE OUT ON CANBERRA’S STREETS

ACT Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith today officially launched the Pathways to Assistance and Treatment (PAT) weekly Veterans Park outreach service which will provide primary health care to Canberrans experiencing homelessness.

PAT, which is operated by Directions Health Services, is a mobile health care clinic which since beginning operation in late 2020 has enabled a significant expansion of outreach services across Canberra.

“Thanks to generous funding support from Capital Health Network and John James Foundation as well as a Community Support Grant, we were able to purchase and fit-out PAT, which is essentially a moving health care clinic. It is like walking into your general practitioner’s office, but we come to you,” Directions Health Services CEO, Bronwyn Hendry explained.

“Prior to PAT, we were able to provide weekly clinics at two public housing sites in the ACT, but that has doubled in the short time since PAT came online at the end of 2020, thanks to additional funding from ACT Health. PAT means we can provide services even at sites that may not have appropriate treatment space.”

Funding from the ACT Health Directorate has enabled the expansion of PAT’s outreach services to five locations across the city. Additional sites are Kanangra Court in Reid, Illawarra Court in Belconnen and now Veterans Park in the CBD.

“The real driver behind us striving to secure PAT was to provide care to people in need, particularly homeless Canberrans whose access to primary care can be severely limited. Our team couldn’t be more pleased to see this dream come to fruition and have the Minister today formally launch our Veterans Park service.”

PAT will be present at Veterans Park each Friday and provide access to a general practitioner, nurse or counsellor free of charge in a setting they feel comfortable in. With PAT, Directions Health is able to deliver comprehensive primary health and counselling services to vulnerable populations who have difficulty accessing mainstream health services.

“Through this service, Canberrans experiencing homelessness will be able to access care for their primary and mental health and tackle the impacts of drug and alcohol dependency in a safe space,” Ms Hendry said. “They don’t have to try and get a doctors’ appointment or wait until they are so unwell they need a hospital.

“We have seen the difference outreach services can make in the lives of vulnerable Canberrans and are excited to be expanding PAT’s reach.

“Alongside PAT, our partners from CAHMA will be providing a free barbeque breakfast each week and advice on harm reduction strategies.

Media Release

“In total, PAT is now providing care five days a week at five locations across the city. To have reached this optimal service delivery goal in just a few short months has exceeded our wildest hopes. We couldn’t have done it without our supportive partners whom we thank for their commitment to providing care to Canberrans in need.”

Media Contact: Bronwyn Hendry 02 6132 4800 or 0417 827 776