

Media Release

More support for Canterbury mental health services

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Efforts are being stepped up to support quake-stricken Cantabrians with more resources being channelled into mental health services, says Associate Health Minister Dr Jonathan Coleman.

Extended GP consultations, increased counselling support and a new specialist earthquake response team has been established to help people cope with the on-going effects of the series of major earthquakes and aftershocks in the region.

The services are being supported through an extra \$1.5 million in funding from the Canterbury District Health Board for primary, secondary and community mental health care services.

"Many people in Canterbury are feeling exhausted and drained by the ongoing stress," Dr Coleman says.

"More people are seeking help and we are monitoring the situation to ensure the Canterbury DHB and mental health providers can continue to meet the demand."

Primary health providers are reporting increasing mental health demand. GPs are providing extended consultations and brief mental health interventions. The earthquake response team – which will liaise with GPs on mental health issues – will provide individual and group therapy for older people, children and their families.

Access to community support services has been improved as people no longer need a specialist to refer them.

Dr Coleman says alcohol and drug services in Canterbury are ensuring people seeking help are being assessed quickly and provided with the appropriate support.

"We know how resilient Cantabrians are, but they've been through an incredibly tough time and help is there if they need it."

Last week the Government announced it was pledging a special payment of up to \$16 million to the Canterbury District Health Board for earthquake related costs in the 2010/11 financial year.

The Ministry of Health is working with the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) on rebuilding greater Christchurch and its surrounds, and supporting the welfare of its residents.