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BUILDING STARTS ON BEGA VALLEY MENTAL HEALTH UNIT

Construction has started on a \$2.2 million interim mental health unit for the Bega Valley, Greater Southern Area Health Service Chief Executive Heather Gray announced today.

Commercial building contractors from the Illawarra region, Camarda & Cantrill Pty Ltd, have been awarded the contract.

The project will involve refurbishing an existing building at the Bega District Hospital to provide six overnight acute mental health beds, two of which are High Dependency Unit beds.

Ms Gray said Camarda & Cantrill have more than 45 years experience in construction excellence and have received numerous NSW Master Builders Association Awards for Building Excellence.

"We are pleased to be welcoming this company to the region to construct the facility which has a completion date of 2010," she said.

Ms Gray said the unit is a temporary measure before the commissioning of the new Bega Valley Health Facility, which will include a 20 bed Mental Health Inpatient Unit.

"The six-bed unit will meet the needs of the community at this time and will allow the establishment and refinement of key workforce and service delivery strategies in the lead up to the 20-bed unit.

"This unit will reduce the reliance on police and ambulance-assisted transport to Goulburn and other mental health acute inpatient units.

"It will mean reduced transport and personal costs to patients, families and carers because people will be able to receive treatment closer to home. Importantly, it will provide care for those with acute mental health problems requiring assessment, stabilisation and treatment in a safe and secure therapeutic environment," she said.

The unit, which is being constructed in the old laundry at the hospital, will admit voluntary and involuntary patients.

Medical, nursing and allied health services will work with acutely unwell patients for behavioural management, symptom control and reintegration into the community.

Key features include:

- 6 overnight, acute, mental health beds, including 2 High Dependency Unit beds.
- single rooms
- a central staff station with line of sight to all rooms
- a multi-purpose family friendly visiting and consulting space
- a private entrance from the Emergency Department and for transport vehicles

Media note: For interviews, please contact the Acting Director, Mental Health and Drug & Alcohol, David West, on 6495 8300 or 0418 414 220.

media release