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Getting to the Core of it, How people in crisis are receiving timelier mental health intervention

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The secondary response Co-Responder Unit (CoRe), is unique in Queensland, Australia, but is based on a model that has been implemented internationally, due to its proven outcomes, not only for consumers and carers, but for health services. CoRe was created to address a situation where police officers have become the newest front line mental health workers; despite the fact they are not clinicians. Police officers, by virtue of their 24 hour emergency service provision, are frequently called upon to be first responders to a mental health crisis (many studies indicate as high as 90% of mental health crisis incidents are dealt with by police). They do this with little training or support in mental health. The CoRe model puts clinicians squarely out in the community connecting with consumers, other service providers, and Emergency Services on a level not previously experienced. Clinicians are more accessible, providing timely assessment and referral in a least restrictive environment. CoRe allows clinicians to provide

improved care in the form of early intervention and rapid assessment in a mental health crisis situation, in an effort to avoid escalation and minimise harm, identifying targeted supports, and reducing presentations to Emergency Departments. CoRe has created an innovative partnership that provides enhanced access to information and expertise on mental health, (for consumers and for emergency services personnel), with a strong collaboration between Queensland Health and Queensland Police Service, a redesign of services to ensure right care, right time and right place, that has led to proven superior outcomes for consumers. The Co-Responder team is made up of a designated Queensland Police Officer and a specialised Mental Health Clinical Nurse Consultant who travel together in an unmarked police car. It is a “secondary response” vehicle, attending “000” incidents in the community at the request of a “first response” police unit.

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