MEDIA RELEASE

PM announces ACMHN CEO Kim Ryan as winner for inaugural Australian Mental Health Prize

Mental health nurse and Australian College of Mental Health Nurses CEO Kim Ryan has been selected as the inaugural winner of the Australian Mental Health Prize.

Announced by the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, at an event held at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) last night (7 December), Kim was selected by the Australian Mental Health Prize Advisory Group from seven outstanding finalists - Annette Baker, Betty Kitchener, Prof Ian Hickey, James Prasevic, Joe Williams and John Mendoza.

ACMHN President Wendy Cross says the Board, Staff and Members of the College are extremely proud of this significant recognition of Ms Ryan's commitment to the profession and to the many Australians who experience mental health concerns.

"Kim is passionate about and committed to improving mental health outcomes for Australians who experience mental health issues. We see this in the way she has managed the College to date and in the collaborative relationships she has established across nursing, mental health and the health sector more broadly" says Prof Wendy Cross. "As the first executive of the College, Kim has demonstrated great strength and vision, and has represented the profession of mental health nursing admirably and with unrelenting enthusiasm. I think it is safe to say we couldn't think of a better recipient of this inaugural prize and that we are extremely proud of her."

Kim Ryan, who lives in Canberra with her husband Bill, and attended the UNSW event with her family, was surprised but thrilled with the outcome of the event. "I'm incredibly honoured and completely overwhelmed to have won this prestigious prize. I am fortunate to work with some incredible people and I feel exceptionally proud to be representing the profession of mental health nursing. To have been selected from such a high calibre group of finalists is very humbling."

Ita Buttrose, Chair of the Australian Mental Health Prize Advisory Group said of Kim's selection, "Mental health nurses are often at the frontline when it comes to working with people who experience mental health conditions in the community. The Advisory Group were incredibly impressed with Kim's commitment to advancing the
profession of mental health nursing, and her tireless work advocating on behalf of mental health nurses. Kim's work demonstrates the enormous difference that specially trained mental health nurses can make in the recovery of people with mental illness."

Scientia Prof Phillip Mitchell, Head of the University of New South Wales School of Psychiatry, commented "Reviewing the entries in the first Australian Mental Health Prize has confirmed that Australia’s reputation as a world leader in many areas of mental health is well deserved. Kim Ryan's work is an outstanding example of Australian innovation in the field of mental health nursing and the positive power of professional collaboration."

In addition to the Prime Minister, Pru Goward MP, NSW Minister for Mental Health (representing NSW Premier Mike Baird) and Ita Buttrose, Chair of the Advisory Group spoke at the event. The event was also attended by a broad spectrum of people from the mental health sector, including politicians, academics, advocates and service providers. Members of the Advisory Group in attendance included Prof the Hon Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO, Prof Patrick McGorry AO, Jack Heath (CEO of mental health charity SANE), Jessica Rowe AM, Sophie Scott, and UNSW Scientia Prof Henry Brodaty, and Prof Perminder Sachdev.

Adj. Assoc. Prof Kim Ryan used her prize acceptance speech to call for support and development of the mental health nursing workforce, and better training and mental health literacy for all nurses and midwives - both now, and into the future.

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