MEDIA STATEMENT

ACMHN calls for action from governments on mental health care for older persons

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN) calls for mental health of older people to be urgently addressed.

ACMHN Chief Executive, Adjunct Associate Professor Kim Ryan made a comment following the release of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption’s Report on the Oakden Older Persons’ Mental Health facility in South Australia on 28 February; which identified inadequate levels of qualified mental health nurses and nursing staff in general.

Ms Ryan highlighted that the situation with Oakden is a reflection of broader systemic issues relating to inadequate access to high quality mental health care for older Australians - which extends beyond the facility, or a problem specific to South Australia.

The report was released around the same time a new research from Monash University reporting high rates of suicide, particularly among men in residential aged care.

“While we have shocking and tragic circumstances around failures of care in one part of the system, we have older men living in the community and in residential aged care facing the highest suicide rates of any age group in Australia.”

“Issues that are contributing to tragic outcomes and service experiences for older persons experiencing mental illness are not occurring in complete isolation from one another.”

“We need a full review and a considered plan to address the mental health of older Australians in the community and in residential aged care facilities,” Ms Ryan said.

Mental health nurses are the largest and most geographically distributed clinical mental health workforce in the country skilled to work within the health system across all age groups.

Ms Ryan also stated that the mental health nursing workforce is highly proficient to respond to the growing need for exceptional mental health services for older persons.

“With the right settings in place, mental health nurses can provide timely assessment and high-quality specialist mental health care to older Australians living in the community and in residential aged care.”

The ACMHN is the professional peak body for mental health nurses in Australia.

END

Available for interview or comment ACMHN CEO Adjunct Professor Kim Ryan

Media Enquiries:
Sharina Smith
E: communications@acmhn.org