MEDIA RELEASE

Australian College of Mental Health Nurses Welcomes the Ratification of OPCAT

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN) welcomes the government’s announcement last week to ratify Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

ACMHN CEO, Adjunct Associate Professor Kim Ryan said that this is a long-awaited victory for human rights and that the College is keen to see improvements made to the treatment of people in mental health units, aged care, immigration detention facilities, prisons and juvenile detention centres.

The ACMHN’s decision to be a signatory to the Australia OPCAT Network demonstrates the College’s position in supporting the Network’s objectives to share information about OPCAT and the benefits of preventive monitoring and to promote OPCAT ratification and implementation in Australia.

“The government’s move to ratify the OPCAT will require Australia to create a process for independent inspections for all places of detention, as well as allowing periodic monitoring visits by the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture” said Ms Ryan.

“No matter the reason someone is detained, or where they are detained; everyone should be treated respectfully and their human rights must be upheld.”

Ms Ryan further commented that, “as a nation, we are just one more step along the way to ensure we uphold our international obligations.”

The College will continue its work independently and collaboratively with others to realise the implementation of OPCAT in Australia.