MEDIA STATEMENT

Australian College of Mental Health Nurses’ Response to Budget 2017-18

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN) welcomes the announcement of additional funding for mental health and public hospitals.

ACMHN CEO, Kim Ryan, welcomed the additional funding for mental health, but expressed disappointment that the Budget fails to provide a clear vision for health workforce development. “Workforce development and a commitment to developing the nursing workforce, the largest health workforce in Australia is imperative if the Government’s objectives under its long term plan for health are to be realised.” Kim stated after the announcement.

Key budget measures include:

- Psychosocial support: $80m in Commonwealth funding, requires state and territory Governments to match, bringing total funding to $160m.
- $34 million to expand mental health services for veterans; plus $10 million for veteran suicide prevention; and $9 million for the veterans’ counselling service.
- Improving telehealth for psychosocial services in regional areas - $9.1 million
- Suicide prevention and support programs in hotspots (locations where suicide repeatedly occurs) and funding for small infrastructure projects - $11.1 million
- Support for mental health research - $15 million
- $2.8b in additional funding to go to the states and territories for public hospitals

The College now calls on State and Territory governments to match the $80m commitment made by the Commonwealth for psychosocial services to ensure that people with mental illness who are not eligible for the NDIS, still have access these services.

The announcement that will see people experiencing drug addiction cut off from welfare under a three strike income management policy is of particular concern to the College.

Kim says the move is “a punitive measure that further stigmatises people experiencing drug addiction and fails to recognise that drug addiction is an illness requiring treatment.”

Available for interview or comment ACMHN CEO Adjunct Professor Kim Ryan

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