MEDIA RELEASE

Mental health nursing conference reflects on social narratives

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses is hosting the 38th International Mental Health Nursing Conference at the Darwin Convention Centre from Wednesday 3 October to Friday 5 October 2012.

‘This Conference is not just for specialist mental health nurses, but for all nurses and midwives interested in mental health care,’ said Adjunct Associate Professor Kim Ryan, CEO of the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses.

The theme of the Conference, *The Fabric of Life*, promises participants the opportunity to consider the significance of mental health and mental health nursing in the construction of individual and social narratives.

The location and theme of the Conference is particularly timely, following the Government’s decision to conduct offshore processing in Nauru and Manus Island. Professor Nicholas Procter, Chair: Mental Health Nursing at the University of South Australia, believes that it is difficult to overestimate the importance of mental health for people of refugee background.

‘The overcrowded and meaningless conditions of detention and the inability to communicate freely and spontaneously in a language most familiar to the detainee have been identified as major factors contributing to mental ill health’, said Professor Procter.

‘Many refugees have had to leave their countries of origin to escape persecution, imprisonment, torture or even death. Families may have been physically separated, causing much grief’, continued Professor Procter.

Adjunct Associate Professor Ryan agrees. ‘The Conference theme reflects on individual and social narratives, a particularly important topic when we think about the social narratives Australia is currently weaving when it comes to the treatment of refugees’, she said.

Keynote Speakers throughout the days of the conference will include:

- Professor Nicholas Procter, Chair Mental Health Nursing and Convenor of the Human Rights and Security Research and Innovation Cluster of the University of South Australia;
- Professor Alan Simpson, Professor of Collaborative Mental Health Nursing, City University London;
- Dr Edward White, Director of Osman Consulting and Conjoint Professor, School of Psychiatry at the University of New South Wales; and
- Mary O’Hagan, international mental health human rights advocate and activist.

Media contact: Kim Ryan, Chief Executive Officer, ACMHN 0417 289 189