MEDIA RELEASE

Don’t ignore the mental health needs of the Australian community – listen to, support and fund our nursing workforce

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN) launched its election campaign today calling on all parties and candidates to commit to five key issues and to listen to, support and fund the nursing workforce.

Kim Ryan, CEO, ACMHN said all parties and candidates could not afford to ignore the mental health needs of the Australian community, and that nurses were critical to creating a mentally healthy Australia.

‘Nurses make up the largest workforce in both mental health and the overall health system. There will be many commitments made by all parties and candidates during this election in mental health and health, and for these to work nurses must play a central role’.

The ACMHN are asking all parties and candidates to commit to five key issues which are:

- No reduction in mental health program funding
- 3-5 year quarantining of mental health nurse funding with Primary Health Networks (PHNs)
- Fund nurse workforce initiatives
- Include nurse representatives on all mental health and other relevant government committees
- Refugees and asylum seekers - Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) and amend the Border Force Act

‘There has been a significant amount of reform happening in mental health and for these changes to work, we must maintain funding and service levels for consumers as programs transition. For mental health nurse services to be equitably distributed across all PHNs, there should be a 3-5 year quarantining and an increase in funding’.

‘We need to fund workforce initiatives that improve the mental health knowledge and clinical skills of all nurses, especially general practice nurses. Nurses must also be included as equal partners in and represented at all levels of policy discussions’, Ms Ryan said.

‘Nurses work in a range of settings, including in detention facilities, and in order for them to do their job the Australian Government must ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and amend the Border Force Act to demonstrate Australia’s commitment to human rights and to allow health professionals to report openly or disclose information about immigration detention centres’.

‘The issues we are asking parties and candidates to commit to effect not just mental health nurses but all nurses. The ACMHN’s wants to see a mental health and health system which provides all people with quality care. But we can’t do this without a properly supported nurse workforce’.

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