MEDIA STATEMENT

ACMHN response to recent tragic deaths in mental health units

Last week we saw the reporting of some very unfortunate circumstances where people have lost their lives in mental health services. Incidents like these are not the result of one particular factor, but rather reflect the end point of many contributing factors such as service design, culture and practice, education and training among many other things. CEO of the ACMHN Ms. Kim Ryan says, “There is no excuse the confronting scenes we have been exposed to in the media last week. However, we need to ask if we really need another enquiry or do we need action?”

Ms. Ryan emphasised the importance of all the Australian government to not only identify, but “appropriately respond to factors known to adversely impact on individuals, workplace systems and cultures, that are barriers to providing contemporary practice in mental health settings”.

Ms. Ryan says that the ACMHN is focused on improving standards and quality of mental health service provision through the profession of mental health nursing and is prepared to assist wherever possible. “The College is currently conducting a project on seclusion and restraint, funded by the National Mental Health Commission, and we would welcome the opportunity to contribute findings and recommendations to the inquiries.”

Ms. Ryan said that she believed that the current research would provide the National Mental Health Commission with vital information to help solve the missing piece of the puzzle. “If we reduce and eliminate restrictive practices such as seclusion and restraint, we need to better understand the factors that impact on and influence the decisions of frontline workers such as mental health nurses. Safety for consumers, nurses and others is a primary concern.”

The ACMHN will provide recommendations to the National Mental Health Commission later this year. “Given all we have seen and heard last week, we hope that the College can contribute in a practical way, to help the sector achieve its goals in reducing and eliminating restrictive practices in mental health settings.”

Available for interview or comment ACMHN CEO Adjunct Professor Kim Ryan

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