MEDIA RELEASE

Backbone of the healthcare system not included in ERG

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses is amazed that the largest part of the healthcare workforce have been left off the Expert Reference Group advising the Commonwealth Government on its response to the National Mental Health Commission’s recent Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services.

The Review of Mental Health Services and Programmes does not include any specific programme or service provided by psychiatrists, however the newly established Expert Reference Group (ERG) is top heavy with them.

“I have no issues with psychiatrists, but I do have an issue with this review being considered through the lens of psychiatry and not the lens of those that provide mental health care 24/7, 365 days a year”, said Adjunct Associate Professor Kim Ryan, CEO of the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN).

“This is not sour grapes, this is reality. Mental health nurses work across all settings of healthcare: in policy, academia, management, administration, research, and clinical practice. Mental health nurses work across commonwealth and state/territory programmes, as well as in the private and public arenas”, Ms Ryan said.

“The Mental Health Nurse Incentive Programme is the only programme of its kind in the country and has been lauded in all reviews and evaluations. Building on such success is crucial for further reform to the mental health sector”, said Ms Ryan.

“There are many mental health nurses in the sector who could provide an expert contribution to this ERG”, Ms Ryan said.

Despite the setting or area of work, nurses are the backbone of the healthcare system. The ACMHN believes nurses need to be acknowledged as such, and included in all discussions around mental health reform.

“I am calling on all my colleagues in the mental health sector to demand that this oversight be addressed”, Ms Ryan said.

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