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ANF WELCOMES GOVERNMENT’S MENTAL HEALTH BOOST

The Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) and the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN) have welcomed the Gillard Government’s $1.5 billion boost to Australia’s mental health services.

“After years of neglect, this is a significant commitment that recognises that mental health is a priority for the community,” ANF (Acting) Federal Secretary, Yvonne Chaperon, said today.

“We believe the raft of new initiatives announced in the Budget will provide much-needed social and clinical support to people experiencing mental health issues across the country, especially the measures focused on mental health problems in children.”

Ms Chaperon said the announcement of $32 million for the establishment of a Mental Health Commission will, for the first time, bring a “whole of Government approach to addressing mental health”, providing greater accountability and transparency to the sector.

But while they backed the majority of the mental health reform package, the ANF and the ACMHN called on the Government to enter into urgent discussions with the sector’s key stakeholders to identify ways to develop the workforce needed to deliver the announced new services and programs.

“The Government needs an integrated strategy to ensure the workforce is equipped and supported to deliver on the Budget’s significant investment in mental health,” Kim Ryan CEO of ACMHN said.

“It is crucial to identify where additional health professionals and other mental health workers will come from, and to up skill the current workforce to deliver the new services.

“Attracting and retaining nurses and other health professionals in the disadvantaged areas being targeted by this investment will be a challenge and we look forward to working with the Government on these workforce issues.”

The ANF, with over 200,000 members, is the professional and industrial voice for nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing in Australia.

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The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses is the professional body representing mental health nurses in Australia. www.acmhn.org

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