MEDIA RELEASE

Mental health nurses the solution to improve services for people with complex mental illness

Mental Health Nurses are the solution to providing services and improving outcomes for people with ongoing and complex mental illness.

In the Budget, the Government announced $344 million for new services for people with severe mental illness. But it has overlooked an already established program – the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program (MHNIP).

Since 2007, Mental Health Nurses have been collaborating with GPs and Psychiatrists to deliver much needed mental health services through the Medicare funded MHNIP. As a result, over 64,000 Australians have benefited from mental health care such as assessment, physical health monitoring, counselling and recovery support.

“The Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program is an innovative and successful model of delivering primary mental health care,” said Kim Ryan, CEO ACMHN.

“Mental health nurses continue to report that every day they are able to avert suicide attempts and admissions to hospital, and return people to work and education as a result of the MHNIP.”

“The Government has to explain why it is establishing new services that will duplicate the work already being done under the MHNIP rather than invest in this existing program.”

“There has been no increase in the incentive payment in 4 years, as a result many nurses have not received a salary increase over the same period. Nurses can only put caring over their salary for so long!”

“Unless the Government acknowledges the work of these nurses by ensuring an urgent review of the incentive payment we will see a great opportunity lost.

At the ACMHN Primary Mental Health Nursing conference being held in Canberra this Friday and Saturday, the College will launch a publication calling on the Government to implement improvements to the MHNIP.

Conference Details:
Venue: Rydges Capital Hill
Dates: Friday 27 May and Saturday 28 May 2011
Official opening by The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Mental Health and Ageing

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