MEDIA RELEASE

Mental health on the agenda, but no mention of the MHNIP

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN) welcomes the release of Government and Coalition election policies on mental health, though College President Prof Wendy Cross has expressed concern that the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program (MHNIP) was not mentioned by either party.

“The MHNIP is a successful program that keeps people with complex mental illness out of hospital. It helps them live productive, self-directed lives” says Prof Cross.

A re-elected Labor Government will commit $83 million to address mental health priority areas, which it says are headspace, Lifeline, and supporting new and existing workplace mental health and suicide prevention initiatives.

Should the Liberal Party get elected, they will establish a National Centre for Excellence in Youth Mental Health, task the National Mental Health Commission with evaluating all existing mental health programs, continue to support the expansion of headspace centres and provide the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre with $5 million to establish an e-health platform that will bring together a wide range of existing services.

Neither party mentions the MHNIP in their plans, which the ACMHN finds disconcerting and illogical, considering the successful outcomes identified by the government’s 2012 evaluation.

The MHNIP funds mental health nurses to work collaboratively with GPs and psychiatrists to support people with severe and persistent mental illness. The Program was capped in May 2012 and access for new medical practices has been limited. Current funding allocations in the forward estimates are insufficient to meet existing service levels.

“The Greens committed $210 million over three years towards the MHNIP. An extra $70 million per year will allow the services provided to be accessible to many more vulnerable Australians”, CEO of the ACMHN, Adjunct Associate Professor Kim Ryan said.

“We repeat our call for all major parties to commit to the continuation and growth of this vital program”, said Ms Ryan. “We call on whoever forms the next Australian Government to match the funding commitment of the Australian Greens”.

Media contact: Kim Ryan, CEO Australian College of Mental Health Nurses
02 6285 1078