



Media release

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Nurses seek action and investment in mental health

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) welcomes today's announcement by the Minister for Health, the Hon Jack Snelling, to conduct a review into Mental Health Bed capacity and demand over the next few weeks.

Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars, ANMF (SA Branch) CEO explains:

"Nurses have been raising serious concerns regarding the adequacy of mental health beds and resourcing across South Australia for some time."

"In recent months, we have been involved in a dispute at Flinders Medical Centre, where nurses have actively opposed the closure of five mental health beds due to the fact that mental health patients do not receive appropriate or timely care and are instead waiting long periods in the Emergency Department.

"Patients and nurses in other metropolitan hospitals have shared similar experiences due to the shortage of acute mental health beds. These issues are not isolated to FMC, but are being felt across South Australia.

"One of the significant issues has also been the continuing failure to adequately resource community mental health strategies - an issue that we also continue to raise with senior health bureaucrats.

"We are pleased that the Minister for Health seems to be listening to our concerns. The review announced by the Minister today is a positive step in the right direction and we look forward to nursing being consulted as part of the review.

"Importantly, what we need now is greater investment and decisive action to be taken on these critical issues.

"Acute mental health beds must be re-opened as a matter of urgency; the community mental health sector must be better resourced and supported; and there should be two pathways into the Emergency Department - one being specifically to meet the needs of mental health patients.

"The current system of housing mental health patients in the Emergency Department is not only unethical, but costs more. Better outcomes and cost savings can be achieved by ensuring mental health patients receive appropriate and timely treatment.

Media Comment: Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars