



MEDIA ALERT

Tuesday 29 January 2013

FMC ED in chaos as Mental Health beds continue to close

Today the Flinders Medical Centre Emergency Department has descended into chaos as SA Health continues to close acute mental health beds at Margaret Tobin Centre, says the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch).

Last week, Nurses identified that the closure of beds within Margaret Tobin Centre will result in Mental Health patients being exposed to unacceptable delays in the Emergency Department which is unsafe for both mental health, and other, patients.

"This morning, the ANMF was advised of 12 mental health patients within the FMC ED awaiting a bed. This includes at least 2 patients who have been forced to stay in the ED for 4 days due to a lack of beds. This is unacceptable and puts patient care at risk," said Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars, ANMF (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary.

"We believe the decision by SA Health to close beds last week has contributed to this crisis.

"This is exactly why the Nurses applied industrial bans last week to circumvent the bed closures in an effort to protect the interests of Mental Health patients and the South Australian community."

"It is now obvious that patients are unable to access an appropriate therapeutic environment.

"This is not only negative for their health, but it is also bad for the taxpayer. Ongoing treatment and care in an emergency department will delay improvement, which increases length of stay and care is provided at a premium, given the higher staffing levels in the ED."

"As the ANMF stated last Friday, the closure of further beds at Margaret Tobin Centre last week will exacerbate an already overwhelmed Emergency Department and further block access to vital services for those most in need."

"Today's current events have vindicated our concerns. These matters will only get worse without immediate action, including the immediate re-opening of closed beds with appropriate staffing levels."

"The ANMF calls upon SA Health to exercise common sense and immediately re-open those beds."

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