



## Mental health bed boost finally a reality

Friday, 30 October 2015

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) has welcomed today's announcement of the opening of 21 additional acute mental health beds within the system.

The State Government has announced that eight new acute short stay beds will be commissioned at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, five at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and four at the Lyell McEwin Hospital, as well as another four psychiatric intensive care beds at the LMH.

ANMF (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars says the move is long overdue and follows years of lobbying by the Federation.

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

"For too long emergency departments have been places where people with severe mental illness, including those detained as a consequence of perceived risk to themselves or others, are spending lengthy periods of time."

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

"This announcement is an important first step in ensuring that mental health patients with acute care conditions can receive safe quality care with agreed safe nursing staffing levels."

Ms Dabars says that while the increased capacity is welcomed, the restructure will result in a reduction of beds from 30 to 15 in mental health intermediate care in the Central Adelaide Local Health Network.

"To ensure that this reduction in beds has absolutely no negative impact on consumers we will continue to monitor this change very closely. We will also work very closely with the State Government and the Department to ensure that the nurses employed in this area are appropriately supported throughout the transition process," she says.

"The recruitment of experienced mental health nursing staff will also be critical to ensuring the additional beds are effective in improving outcomes for mental health patients."