

MEDIA RELEASE

9 October 2018

NURSES AND UNIVERSITY UNITE TO ADDRESS SEVERE SHORTAGE OF MENTAL HEALTH NURSES

A leading South Australian university and the peak body representing South Australia's nursing and midwifery workforce have joined forces in a bid to increase the number of qualified mental health nurses in the state.

The partnership between Flinders University and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) was developed on the back of statistics revealing South Australia is set to lose up to half of its nursing and midwifery workforce over the next few years.

The initiative will provide South Australian nurses with more streamlined access to post-graduate studies at Flinders University by enabling them to springboard from a related Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course at the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Education at Ridleyton in Adelaide.

Announced during Mental Health Awareness Week, and ahead of World Mental Health Day (10 October), the partnership will launch with a focus on helping to address the state's severe shortage of mental health nurses.

ANMF SA CEO/Secretary Adjunct Associate Professor Elizabeth Dabars AM is pleased to be working with one of Adelaide's leading universities towards the solution to a 'real-world' problem.

"This partnership is crucial when you consider that only qualified mental health nurses or those studying towards such qualifications are able to provide care for mental health patients," Ms Dabars says.

"Mental health is already chronically understaffed. There are hospital beds right now that remain unopened because there aren't enough qualified nurses across the country, let alone in South Australia."

"Without strategic partnerships of this nature, the future of mental health looks extremely grim, particularly as an area set to lose the most nursing staff to retirement over the next decade."

Flinders University Vice President and Executive Dean of College of Nursing and Health Sciences Professor Alison Kitson says the partnership reflects the University's ability to adapt to meet workforce demand.

“We are delighted to be part of a potential solution to critical challenge facing our health system now and into the future,” Professor Kitson says.

“The University prides itself on identifying ways to make it easier for people to access tertiary education, particularly for shift-workers like nurses who require more flexible study options to upskill in a specialised field.”

“This exciting partnership will make it easier than ever before for South Australian nurses to assess and engage in timely, relevant and manageable ‘bite-size’ learning from CPD level all the way through to a Masters qualification.”

Prior to the collaboration, Registered Nurses could only access post-graduate university studies via the SA Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC) application process once or twice a year (course-dependent).

A marketing campaign to promote the partnership to Flinders University alumni and more than 20,500 members of the nursing and midwifery workforce will launch later this year.

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