

Pre-election submission for 2022: Growing the specialist mental health nursing workforce

The Australian College of Mental Health Nursing (ACMHN) is the lead organisation representing mental health nursing. Our members are committed to enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of all those living in our communities.

Background

A mental health nurse (MHN) is a registered nurse who has ideally undertaken formal specialist mental health education. The ACMHN formally credentials those MHNs seeking recognition of advanced levels of specialist postgraduate education, these are Credentialed Mental Health Nurses (CMHNs). The MHN has a scope of practice across community and in-patient settings that includes but is not restricted to: Psychological interventions; psychopharmacology; physical health assessments and treatments; risk assessment and intervention for suicide, self-harm and aggression.

This submission targets the following:

1. CMHNs be **granted eligibility to be Better Access** providers to use their considerable qualifications in psychological therapies. Funding for 200 CMHNs nationally will make a significant impact on enhancing psychological wellbeing, particularly if regional, remote and very remote areas are prioritised.
2. **Revive and restructure the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program** into an MHN Access Programme (MAP) for those consumers with complex but non-urgent needs. Funding for 400 CMHNs nationally for this missing middle population is urgently needed.
3. Mental health nurses to **be added to the list of eligible NDIS providers** of therapeutic and behavioural supports to then treat those with one or multiple co-occurring mental health, addiction, and intellectual disability diagnosis.
4. Dedicated funding to **ensure an MHN/ a CMHN or nurse practitioner mental health position was available within each federally-run aged care residential** facility. This would be a cost-effective approach to improving the mental health and wellbeing outcomes for older persons.
5. Recognition of the specialty of mental health nursing through **National Registration via the Nurses and Midwifery Board of Australia**.
6. The ACMHN co-ordinate the development of either the **re-introduction of a three-year direct entry program or the development of a new four-year undergraduate dual degree** where graduates finish with a qualification in mental health nursing in line with recommendations flowing from the Productivity Report into Mental Health. The ACMHN is leading the development of credentialing for enrolled nurses.
7. **Specialist credential in areas including acute care, nurse practitioner, psychotherapy, and education**. To ensure specialist undergraduate and postgraduate content is maintained over time this funding includes scholarships and curriculum development administered by the ACMHN.

For any enquiries, please contact the CEO at stephen.jackson@acmhn.org or phone 02 6285 1078.