

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **The work starts now: mental health nurses welcome Andrews Government promise of a mental health system that cares and promotes wellbeing and recovery**

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) welcomes the Victorian mental health royal commission's recommendations to mend the mental health system based on a philosophy of 'how can we help?'.

Many recommendations align with the priorities outlined in the ANMF (Vic Branch) submission to the royal commission which include fixing funding, retaining clinical mental health services in the hospital system, removing fragmentation between services and improving the safety of the mental health workforce.

ANMF (Vic Branch) Assistant Secretary Madeleine Harradence said 'The recommendations and the Andrews Government's sense of urgency and deep understanding of the broken system give us comfort that real reform will occur that listens and responds to the voices of people with mental ill health and their families.

'On first reading we support all of the recommendations and we look forward to working with the government to ensure mental health nurses and nurse-led models, particularly in the community, are part of the solutions.'

'We won't rest until the abolished yet successful federally-funded mental health community nurse program, known as the 'Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program or MHNIP' is restored and supporting people with complex, often trauma-based mental illness to stay well and living, working and learning in their communities,' Ms Harradence said.

The ANMF (Vic Branch) asked for and supports recommendation 5 and the establishment of Adult and Older Adult Local Mental Health and Wellbeing Services and Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services designed to provide integrated, holistic care, support to navigate the system and shared care between primary and secondary services.

'This will address system fragmentation and provide resources to follow up and support people with a mental illness,' Ms Harradence said.

'It will improve access, including the provision of alternative entry points other than the emergency department, it will provide care to keep people well, help people recover and save lives,' she said.

While the emphasis is on turning a reactive system into a compassionate, preventative and recovery system, recommendation 8 will improve the ability to respond and support people experiencing a mental health crisis.

The report acknowledges that the broken system has harmed not helped many of those who took the difficult step of asking for support.

It also acknowledges the trauma mental health nurses and others, working in an under-resourced and disconnected system, have experienced because they were unable to meet the overwhelming needs of unwell Victorians.

Recommendation 58, which addresses workforce safety and wellbeing, will be critical to ensuring nurses, doctors and allied health professionals are safe at work and in a position to provide the best care possible.

## **Background**

The final recommendations of the royal commission will build on the work of the Mental Health Reform Victoria, established in February 2020, already under way. Since then the Andrews Government has:

- announced a targeted mental health levy in the 2020–21 Budget
- provided \$59.7m in August 2020 to strengthen the surge capacity of clinical and community mental health services across Victoria in its COVID-19 response, and fast-track additional mental health beds and the statewide rollout of the Hospital Outreach Post-suicidal Engagement (HOPE) program
- provided \$59.4m in April 2020 for mental health support services during the COVID-19 outbreak
- provided \$19.5m in May 2020 in funding to implement royal commission interim recommendations
- provided \$28.5m funding in August 2020 to support students struggling with mental health issues as part of a COVID-19 response
- allocated an additional 142 acute mental health beds to Melbourne Health and Barwon Health with 35 public beds in private health settings out to tender
- funded an extra 120 mental health graduate nurse positions to commence throughout 2021
- included \$3.1m in the 2020–21 Budget to support 100 transition nursing to specialty mental health permanent employment positions and \$950,000 for pre-qualification employment programs for nurses.
- expanded hospital-in-the-home program to extend to mental health at Barwon Health and Orygen Youth Health
- expanded suicide prevention programs such as Hospital Outreach Post-suicidal Engagement (HOPE) program and an outreach program for children and young people who have self-harmed or are at risk of suicide
- provided \$338,000 in wellbeing grants for mental health services and \$600,000 additional funding for the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria to provide valuable counselling and support to nurses, midwives and personal care workers
- held a sector-wide symposium on the proposed Victorian Collaboration Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing.

**The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) has more than 92,000 members – nurses, midwives and aged care personal care workers – across the Victorian health, mental health and aged care sectors.**

**Media inquiries: ANMF (Vic Branch) Robyn Asbury – M: 0417 523 252**