

Submission 217 — Australian College of Mental Health Nurses

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research in Australia.

The ACMHN is the peak professional membership and advocacy organisation for mental health nurses in Australia. It works on behalf of members to advance the quality, status and recognition of the mental health nursing profession and to enhance the mental health of the community.

Promoting, facilitating and disseminating research into mental health and mental health nursing is one of the objectives of the ACMHN. The College recognises the important role research plays in supporting the development of best practice in mental health nursing and improving mental health of all Australians. The ACMHN believes research in the area of mental health is a priority, given the well documented prevalence of mental illness and the economic and social impact of mental health issues. The College is pleased that research into mental health has recently become a higher priority in Australia. However the ACMHN believes that current research directions are dominated by investment in bio-medical models, randomized control trials and other purely quantitative approaches. The strategic direction of mental health research in Australia must expand in scope to incorporate research that is related to health service delivery and the social determinates of health. The current national strategic directives for services to achieve a primary healthcare focus and engage with consumers to develop and implement services means it is essential that funded-research includes that which incorporates the more person-focused, qualitative approaches.

Nurses account for the majority of the national workforce in specialised mental health facilities in Australia. They provide a significant proportion of the care that is delivered to people with mental illness, in particular acute and/or chronic and severe mental illness. At the same time, nurse led research and research into nursing practice does not receive funding commensurate with the impact nursing practice has on the health care of all Australians.

The ACMHN is keen to contribute further to the strategic review and will encourage mental health nursing researchers to participate in the public consultation processes.