

12 May 2017

Queensland mental health nurses: a voice to lead

Queensland nurses continue to play a vital role in bringing about practical changes to the state's mental health care system.

Marking **International Nurses Day** (12 May), Queensland Mental Health Commissioner Dr Lesley van Schoubroeck acknowledged the dedication of the state's nurses, often at the frontline in treatment and care of people with mental illness or impacted by problematic alcohol and other drugs.

Nurses make up the largest workforce in health and also in mental health.

"Nurses have always been a force for change," Dr van Schoubroeck said.

International Nurses Day takes place on 12 May each year, celebrating the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth.

Dr van Schoubroeck said Queensland's Mental Health Act 2016 strengthened provisions to protect the rights of consumers and families, however clinical staff continue to play a critical role.

"It is the nurses who have the day-to-day contact with people in mental health facilities, including in locked wards," she said. "Their contribution to establishing a culture of treating people with respect and dignity cannot be underestimated."

Dr van Schoubroeck said nurses, as well as other frontline service providers, people with lived experience and the broader community, were making a valuable contribution to the current renewal of the *Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019*.

"We have been travelling around Queensland to hear directly from local communities about mental health and wellbeing, mental illness, problematic alcohol and other drug use and suicide prevention," Dr van Schoubroeck said.

Some of the issues identified and discussed at consultation forums include:

- people want to be valued and supported by services that consider their needs holistically and are provided in an integrated and accessible manner
- the importance of social inclusion and connection
- the importance of mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention strategies, particularly for children and young people to build awareness and resilience
- the importance of peer support for supporting recovery across mental illness, problematic alcohol and other drug use, and suicide.

"Nurses are a voice to lead and I would encourage nurses and others working in mental health care to contribute their views to the Strategic Plan renewal process," Dr van Schoubroeck said.

Submission can be emailed to strategicplanreview@gmhc.qld.gov.au by **5pm Friday, 12 May 2017**. Further information, including discussion papers, can be viewed at www.gmhc.qld.gov.au

