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COVID-19 RECOVERY – DISTRICT HOSPITALS

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) today called on the Gutwein Liberal Government to focus on Tasmania's 13 District Hospitals in the upcoming State Budget.

"Many communities across Tasmania have a district hospital providing inpatient stays as well as emergency treatment through dedicated emergency departments, along with some residential aged care facilities," ANMF Branch Secretary Emily Shepherd said.

"District hospitals have run on shoestring budgets for decades, providing essential health care services to their communities and preventing further strain on Tasmania's already stretched public hospitals."

"Providing funding in the upcoming State Budget for the employment of more child health nurses and more nursing, allied health, and support staff to implement a holistic health model across all district hospitals, will not only contribute to the economic recovery by creating jobs but will also importantly address the socioeconomic recovery for our communities both now and into the future."

Ms Shepherd said Tasmania's child health nurses across the State already do an amazing job with the resources they are provided.

"Imagine what they could do to contribute to improving the health outcomes of future generations with more, not to mention the jobs this would create to add to a thriving community and economy?"

"In addition, our district hospitals could be utilised as community hubs to provide health care, health education, and improve the socioeconomic outcomes of communities with co-located services."

"Don't let Tasmania's social and economic recovery be a single point plan, focusing purely on economic recovery."

Ms Shepherd said the State Government has given the recovery the priority it deserves and wasted no time in establishing an advisory council to inform its strategy.

"Nurses and midwives were on the forefront of the COVID-19 response in our healthcare system and can be part of the solution."

"Any funding in the upcoming State Budget focused on investment in nursing and midwifery is likely to have a twofold benefit."

“Investing now in resourcing and utilising nurses and midwives to their full potential not only prepares and safeguards the Tasmanian health system and the Tasmanian community from a devastating second wave, which would be crippling both economically and socially for all Tasmanians, but it also builds on the social recovery which is fundamental to overall social and economic prosperity.”

Ms Shepherd said nurses and midwives are well placed to assist in the support of individuals, families, and communities in underpinning and supporting their economic recovery.

“They can also guide and support the ongoing social recovery of individuals, families, and communities. It is widely accepted that education, income, employment, and social support greatly affect the health of individuals and communities”.

“Equally, investing in improving the foundations of healthy physical development, emotional support, and support for parents in early life have marked impacts on the future social, cognitive, and physical wellbeing of children.”

Ms Shepherd said conversely, those children unable to access this dedicated support are likely to experience decreased educational outcomes, which in turn is likely to have a negative impact on their future employment opportunities, income and, in turn, their health outcomes.

“Enormous opportunities exist within our communities to improve not only acute health concerns but long-standing chronic conditions along with education, support, and social engagement where communities can work together to improve health outcomes, health literacy, and overcome challenges caused from poor socioeconomic status.”

“Let’s learn from the lessons of COVID-19 – let nurses and midwives be part of the response and the longer-term solution.”

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