



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2002**

### **NURSING SHORTAGE**

The *Inquiry into mental health services in New South Wales - Final Report* by the Select Committee on Mental Health discusses mental health nursing issues in detail.

“The nursing shortage is preventing the opening of new mental health beds and placing strain on a sector already operating on limited resources. Further career opportunities must be developed and encouraged for nurses, with appropriate remuneration. Mental health nurses and workers in general, are historically a team-orientated workforce. Assisting people to get well again can be a tremendously satisfying occupation. Unfortunately, the episodic and short-term care of people with a mental illness, with its ‘revolving door’ outcomes, has diminished job satisfaction” the Hon Dr Brian Pezzutti MLC said today.

Dr Pezzutti said today “Improving facilities and services, funding more long-term beds and increasing lengths of rehabilitation, may not only improve the patients’ recovery, but also provide incentives for people to work in the sector and many of the dissatisfied to return.”

“NSW Health urgently needs to address the critical shortage in mental health nursing. The long-term sustainability of mental health nursing requires further Commonwealth support. The educational opportunities for nurses need to improve and the report recommends that generic undergraduate nursing programs must incorporate a mandatory mental health component.” Dr Pezzutti said today.

The final report also reports on the horrendous working conditions at Mulawa women’s prison. In February 2002, an occupational health and safety report made 31 findings, including that nurses were not provided with duress alarms and that the mental health unit does not have duress alarms. The report made 28 recommendations to upgrade the facility to OH&S standards.

“Two years after the Select Committee on the Increase in Prisoner Populations recommended a review of the Mum Shirl Unit at Mulawa be conducted, no review has been conducted. I understand that prison officers at Mulawa have taken industrial action over the conditions at the complex, I must admit, after visiting the complex, I cannot blame them” Dr Pezzutti said today.

**The Hon Dr Brian Pezzutti RFD MLC**

Chair

**A COPY OF THE COMMITTEE’S FINAL REPORT IS AVAILABLE ON  
THE NSW PARLIAMENT’S WEBSITE AT: [www.parliament.nsw.gov.au](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au)**

*For further information and comment please ring the Hon Dr Brian Pezzutti MLC,*

Chairman of the Committee, on 02 9230 2322