

Submission
No 9

**INQUIRY INTO EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND
APPROPRIATE DELIVERY OF OUTPATIENT AND
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Name: Dr Cathy Francis

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Dear Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health

I and my co-author, Professor Rhonda Wilson, would like to draw your attention to our journal article titled 'The personal cost of repetitive mental health inquiries that fail to result in change' and its findings (please see abstract below). We would encourage you to fully consider the implications of the article's findings in the inquiry that is currently being undertaken.

Of note, more than 55 high profile public inquiries relevant to mental health have been held in Australia over the last 30 years. As a result there have been more than 1,200 relevant recommendations made over that time. Many of the recommendation themes are repeated inquiry after inquiry, and many key problems first identified 30 years ago remain long-standing and are still waiting to be addressed. We trust that your submission and hearing processes will be sure to avoid unnecessary duplication and unnecessary trauma for the people you call upon as witnesses. And, we ask if this inquiry will include review and reporting functions on the implementation of the recommendations that arise from it?

Kind regards,

Dr Cathy Francis

Article details available here: [https://www.collegianjournal.com/article/S1322-7696\(22\)00071-3/pdf](https://www.collegianjournal.com/article/S1322-7696(22)00071-3/pdf)

ABSTRACT

Background: Nurses and other professionals working in mental health care, and those utilising it, will likely be aware that the sector has been the subject of scrutiny through numerous public inquiries and Royal Commissions over the years.

Aim: The aim of this paper is to understand the total number of high-profile public inquiries undertaken in relation to mental health in Australia over the last 30 years. Importantly, we then seek to quantify the likely contributions by the community, including by people with experience of mental illness and their supporters, to those inquiries and to consider the personal impacts and outcomes of those contributions.

Methods: Information available in the public domain (online) on Royal Commissions, parliamentary inquiries, and federal Commission inquiries held in Australia between 1991 and August 2021, relating to mental health, is drawn on, collated, and compared.

Findings: No less than 55 high-profile public inquiries relevant to mental health have been held over the last 30 years, involving more than 55,000 public submissions and 9,000 witnesses, among other contributions made by the community. A significant proportion of these include contributions made by people who use mental health services, who share their personal stories in a process that is acknowledged as being potentially traumatic.

Discussion: Despite this enormous effort by the community generally, and by people with experience of mental health care specifically, to effect change in the mental health sector through formal inquiry processes, analysis shows that key recommendation themes identified for mental health care 30 years ago remain current issues today.

Conclusion: We see a role for mental health nurses together – to call on the Federal and State Governments to fund and implement the meaningful change required to improve the mental health system, as identified in the long-line of inquiries to date. With major budget announcements for mental health care recently made in Australia, now is the time to influence policy direction and implementation into the future.