

Psychiatrists say de-institutionalisation needs a rethink

**National Association of Practising Psychiatrists
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The National Association of Practising Psychiatrists (NAPP) has welcomed calls from the South Australian State Coroner, Mr Wayne Chivell, for a full review of mental health services following the deaths of six schizophrenic patients and one doctor.

Speaking in Adelaide, Dr Gil Anaf, President of NAPP, said "Public psychiatry has been run into the ground under the mantra of 'de-institutionalisation' not only in South Australia but across the whole country."

"Specialist public psychiatric hospitals have been closed without ensuring that alternatives are effective, or properly funded."

NAPP believes that whilst de-institutionalisation was appropriate many patients clearly have lost the sanctuary and security of a large specialist hospital.

Dr Anaf supported comments by Professor Robert Goldney of Adelaide University that in the "push to keep people out of hospital at all costs, the basic humanity of offering asylum to people has been lost".

"We have to be careful of the term 'in the community' " Dr Anaf said. "It can mean a decent, new, well staffed facility or a doss house with little chance of adequate medication or a park bench."

"A Public system that has been run down, together with a private system that is under attack from Government, will not help patients cope in the community."

The de-stigmatisation of all psychiatric illnesses is an ongoing educative process. People who are wandering the streets without treatment reinforce stereotypes of mental illness and increase stigmatisation." Dr Anaf said.

"The South Australian Health Minister, Mr Dean Brown, has a daunting task ahead if he is effectively going to tackle this issue. A proper analysis of what has happened in public psychiatry in South Australia in the last 10 years will be a good starting point." Dr Anaf said.

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