Major gift to transform the delivery of mental health care in Australia

A pioneering new family-based mental health initiative was recently launched at the St Vincent's Campus. The St Vincent's Centre for Family Based Mental Health Care has been established thanks to the visionary support of Sydney philanthropists who have jointly contributed $1 million through the Grant Family Charitable Trust and the Crouch Family to develop new family-based models of mental health care.

International research has found that the role of families in the recovery of people with mental illness is currently undervalued by clinicians. St Vincent's hopes to turn this around through the endeavours of the Centre to establish new models of care and improved collaboration between individuals, their families and social and health care providers.

The Centre will be directed by the newly appointed St Vincent's Professor of Mental Health Nursing, Professor Niels Buus. This new role has been established in partnership with the University of Sydney Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery and will also lead the development of post-graduate education programs to develop the mental health nursing workforce.

"This new initiative will be at the forefront of mental health reform in Australia, by finding ways to engage families and the community in supporting and healing people with mental health problems, in partnership with government and non-government organisations" Professor Buus noted.

The Centre will achieve these aims by integrating novel family interventions into the existing healthcare services. Professor Buus says, "A recovery-oriented approach seeks to assist people and families in living satisfying lives despite the disabling effects of mental illness".

A key recovery-oriented intervention that will be introduced by the Centre will be the Open Dialogue social network intervention. The approach was originally developed in Wester Finland, but has now been successfully implemented to healthcare systems in Europe and the USA.

The Centre for Family Based Mental Health Care has been launched in partnership with St Vincent's Private Hospital Sydney, St Vincent's Hospital Sydney's Mental Health Service and the University of Sydney Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery. The Centre continues a longstanding tradition of providing mental health care to patients in need, with the Sisters of Charity opening one of Australia's first mental health units at St Vincent's, Darlinghurst.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with St Vincent's and look forward to educating a new generation of mental health nurses to work collaboratively with families to support people living with mental illness," stated Professor Donna Waters.

Speaking at the launch of the Centre, Mr John Grant AM shared how his own family experience had driven his desire to change the face of mental health care in Australia. John

approached Michael Crouch and his family to work together to help fund this new mental health initiative.

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