

**AFCNA's target in 2010 and beyond is addressing mental health issues  
within our communities**

GOAL: Equipping our churches to be safe places for those who are battling mental ill health via holistic health ministry. Developing the potential within our churches to be places of healing and wholeness. Promoting the awareness that mental ill health can affect anyone of us or our loved ones and friends. FCN (Faith Community Nursing) has the potential to deliver truly holistic health care.

A slogan that has been adopted within mental health nursing is: there is no health without mental health. AFCNA(Australian Faith Community Nurses Association) would like to promote the awareness that there is **no health (physical or mental) without spiritual health**. This is the key difference in providing community based nurse-led health care using the FCN model. We provide care from the perspective of healthy Christian spirituality.

We all have mental health - we can all have mental illness. Mental illness does not discriminate. It is also important to recognise mental ill health in its less severe forms and realise that it should not go unaddressed either. We need to tap into the potential of our churches to provide a greater sense of community for all of us. FCN can do this by equipping and mobilising our congregations to practically show the love of Christ to all who are in need.

Our churches have what is needed to address many of the mental health problems in society. We provide places where the community can gather on a regular basis and we open our doors to all no matter the age, gender, and ethnicity. We provide companionship to people and individuals who are willing to walk alongside others who are struggling. I believe there are many willing and able people within our churches who are waiting for clear direction to go into action.

Loneliness and social isolation is said to be the number one problem contributing to mental ill health. As followers of Christ we can provide a place of safety and shelter in our faith community for those who are feeling isolated. It will take much prayerful thought and planning to provide such places – it could never be simply a matter of flinging open the church doors and saying come on in. Our churches can be such places where the lost find a place of belonging, the hurting have oil poured on their wounds and firm bandages applied.

Nurses today are trained from a holistic perspective. We are educated to understand that there is much more than the bio-medical perspective to address health issues. We are affected by psychological, environmental and social issues. We are also affected by our spiritual health. This is an area of health that is under- addressed and under- rated but one that may be of the utmost importance. Where are the nurses that are addressing this area today? Faith community nursing may be at the forefront of future direction for the nursing profession.