Sunshine Coast nurse recognised for excellence in his field

A Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service Mental Health Clinical Nurse Consultant has been recognised as a leader in his field at the annual Queensland Nurses and Midwives’ Union (QNMU) Professional Practice Awards.

Christopher Dawber is a credentialed mental health nurse, psychotherapist, group facilitator and clinical supervisor with more than 35 years’ mental health nursing experience in both public and private settings.

Chris won the Positive Practice Environment Champion Award, for his active involvement in developing supervision and support frameworks for nurses, including establishing critical incident stress management, supervision and peer support programs for nurses in a number of Australian health services over the past two decades.

The Nursing and Midwifery Reflective Practice Group (RPG) Program has been running at SCHHS for a more than a decade and was extended to Brisbane’s Metro South Hospital and Health Service three years ago. Now other disciplines, such as medical officers and allied health, have also begun utilising the RPG model to provide effective clinical supervision.

Chris is the author of a number of journal articles on RPG and staff support. Three years ago, he formed a collaboration with University of the Sunshine Coast to evaluate the SCHHS RPG program longitudinally with a number of articles currently undergoing peer review. He has also published articles challenging unhealthy culture and unnecessary bureaucracy within health systems. Chris was a key nursing representative in the development of Australia’s first state-wide Consultation Liaison model of service and is a member of the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses and the Australian Clinical Supervision Association.

More recently, Chris has teamed with SCHHS communications team to develop mindfulness and relaxation programs for patients and staff within the health service. Chris values the interpersonal aspects of caregiving and believes nurses and midwives have a particular role in balancing the ‘business of health care’ with compassion and humanism.

“I am extremely grateful for this award, particularly in view of the calibre of other nominees. I see the award as a way of promoting the importance of staff support and would like to acknowledge the wonderful nurses and midwives that I work with. I truly
value the reflective spaces that we have been able to create within this health service and believe that we are amongst the world leaders in the area of nursing clinical supervision. I hope that these groups will continue long after I have gone.”

Feedback from the judging committee said Chris stood out due to his excellent work in fostering a positive practice environment for patients and nursing staff alike, as well as training other nurses to do the same.

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