

Media release

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SA Health must ensure consumers, families and carers are central in the response to the Review of Oakden Older Persons Mental Health Service

Chief Executive of the Health Consumers Alliance, Mr Michael Cousins, has called on SA Health to ensure health consumers, their families and carers are central in the response to the Review of Oakden Older Persons Mental Health Service – and in ongoing monitoring of safety and quality in all aspects of South Australia’s health and aged care services.

‘That 21 staff have been reported to the Health Practitioners Regulation Agency, eight staff have been dismissed and three staff reported to the police is an extraordinary statement of the extent of problems at Oakden and the larger health and aged care systems within which it operates.

‘Numerous systems and processes should have intervened earlier and have failed the public. That the systems of governance, safety and quality, and accreditation failed consumers and their families for more than a decade is scandalous. The community of South Australia deserves better.

‘Health consumers trust health and aged care services to deliver safe, quality care. They expect problems to be identified early and fixed quickly. Most staff work hard to provide high quality care. It is disturbing that seemingly a whole health unit has been failing to do so for over a decade.

‘That the government has accepted all six recommendations in the Review report is to be expected. The government must adequately fund all recommendations and openly report progress to the community.

‘I expect SA Health will publicly report on their progress in implementing the review’s recommendations. All involved must genuinely commit to building a health system that is genuinely consumer-centred and puts the needs of health consumers first. Unfortunately, the review report is largely silent on how consumers and carers will be involved in implementing the six recommendations.’

Mr Cousins emphasised that ongoing transparency, and accountability, is crucial. ‘This means consumers, families and carers must be consulted and engaged not only in the response to the review but also in all aspects of ongoing health service governance and public accountability.

‘Consumers, families and carers must be involved now and in all future safety and quality measures if the community’s trust is to be restored.’

END

For further information contact Michael Cousins, Chief Executive: 0488 109 124.