



## **Pru Goward**

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Medical Research

Assistant Minister for Health

Minister for Women

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Monday, 30 November 2015

### **NEW PRINCIPAL OFFICIAL VISITOR TO CONTINUE ADVOCACY FOR PATIENT CENTRED CARE**

Minister for Mental Health Pru Goward today announced the appointment of a new Principal Official Visitor of the Mental Health Official Visitor Program, which safeguards the rights, dignity and standards of care for mental health and involuntary drug and alcohol patients.

“Principal Official Visitor, Ms Jan Roberts, has been part of the Mental Health Official Visitor Program for 30 years, and led it with great integrity for the last 12, and today retires leaving behind a widely recognised and respected legacy,” Ms Goward said.

“The role of Principal Official Visitor supports over 90 Official Visitors who inspect public and private mental health facilities and involuntary drug and alcohol units, and who advocate on behalf of patients and their carers.”

As Principal Official Visitor, Ms Roberts championed the need to improve the physical health care of mental health consumers and worked closely with the Agency for Clinical Innovation to develop dietary guidelines for mental health patients. She also contributed to the revision of Sexual Safety Guidelines, which now have greater emphasis on prevention and support.

“Ms Roberts has worked tirelessly to improve the NSW mental health system, advocating for the rights and needs of people being treated for a mental illness. She has also succeeded in establishing and promoting recognition of the benefits the Official Visitors’ Program offered to mental health patients,” Ms Goward said.

“Today Ms Roberts hands over the reins to Ms Karen Lenihan who will build on her legacy and continue to develop the Program for the benefit of our mental health and involuntary drug and alcohol patients,” Ms Goward said.

Ms Lenihan, an Official Visitor with the Program for three years, has held senior nursing, management and teaching positions and has worked as a nurse locally and internationally.

Ms Goward said Ms Lenihan brings to the role a wide understanding of the NSW Health system and the rights and needs of mental health consumers.

“Official Visitors are independent from the health system and come from a range of cultural, professional and personal backgrounds,” Ms Goward said.

For over 170 years, Official Visitors have been making a valuable contribution to the NSW Health system, dating back to 1843.