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SUPPORT FOR THE RURAL NURSE WORKFORCE A PRIORITY, SAYS ACN

Rural health services are coming under increasing pressure due to the trend of an ageing nursing workforce.

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is calling for the development of robust and cost effective support structures that encourage the recruitment and retention of nurses in their Federal Pre-Budget Submission 2014-2015; an initiative they believe will go towards addressing the rural workforce issue.

ACN is calling for the Government to fund two important workforce scholarship programs; the first to support newly registered nurses to practice in rural health services, and the second, to support rural nurses to continue to maintain and develop their skills.

Adjunct Professor Debra Thoms, CEO of ACN, said attracting and keeping nurses working in rural areas is vital to the health outcomes of these communities and key to protecting the viability of health care services outside of metropolitan areas.

“All Australians, no matter their location, deserve equal access to health care. The implementation of ACN’s proposed scholarship schemes would enable newly registered nurses to undertake clinical learning in a rural health service.

“It would also afford postgraduate and professional development funding for nurses already working in country and remote regions. Both of these initiatives offer important measures to address the current health care inequalities and high costs faced by people living in rural Australia,” said Adjunct Professor Thoms.

Dr Jane Mills, ACN Rural Nursing and Midwifery Community of Interest member, unreservedly supports ACN’s recommendations, stating that rural nurses have long been the backbone of health care delivery in rural and remote Australia.

“These nurses are growing older, and for us to sustain services in the bush we need to focus on the development of a succession plan that meets the needs of graduates.

“Early career rural nurses need to be supported, to develop their knowledge and skills in a positive environment that accounts for their changing needs and those of their patients.
“If we don’t implement transition to practice programs and offer scholarships, there will be unacceptable levels of attrition. These strategies are the bridge to equity, ensuring comprehensive health care for all Australians,” said Dr Mills.

ACN is committed to supporting the rural nurse workforce and strongly encourages the government to consider ACN’s recommendations in their Budget allocation for 2014/2015, where strong foresight will help to ensure sustainable health care for our communities.


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For interviews with Adjunct Professor Thoms or Dr Jane Mills, please contact Diana Spencer or Felicity Zadro on 029212 7867 or diana@zadrocommunications.com.au.