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National Nursing Forum shines the light on leadership

More than 250 nurse leaders from around the nation gathered in Brisbane this week for the National Nursing Forum, the signature annual event held by the Australian College of Nursing (ACN).

This year’s theme, “advancing nurse leadership”, was examined in a comprehensive program of workshops and presentations by more than 60 local and international speakers. They shared their insights about critical issues facing the nursing profession, including the need for strong, confident and resilient nurse leaders within the health care system.

Governments around the world are facing the harsh reality of the rising cost of health care provision to an ageing population and a population with a rising incidence of chronic disease. In Australia, budget pressures mean that the Federal and State Governments are seeking ways to contain health expenditure. Kathleen McLaughlin, acting CEO of the ACN, told the Forum delegates that the economic pressure of providing health care, combined with the need to achieve cost efficiencies without sacrificing patient safety and satisfaction, means there are competing priorities that nurses confront and respond to on a daily basis.

“Nurses are uniquely placed to provide advice, propose reforms and lead the way in cost management without reducing the quality of care provided. A nurse leader can have a positive effect on improving patient care and optimising outcomes by leading the policy, cultural, clinical and organisational change required to deliver quality improvements,” said Ms McLaughlin.

Evidence from around the world shows that the role of a nurse leader must not be underestimated. A nurse with leadership skills is critical to advancing the nursing profession and developing a healthy work environment and culture. Another important aspect of nurse leadership is its ability to give nurses an essential voice in the development of patient care environments. With nurses consistently rated as the most trusted profession, they are uniquely placed to effect transformational change at every level by working collaboratively with all health professionals.

“Being a nurse leader is more than working in a managerial position. A nurse leader is a change maker. ACN wants to ensure that nurses have access to the latest information and networking, mentoring and educational opportunities to develop their leadership skills and, by doing so, lead the improvement of the health of all Australians,” Ms McLaughlin continued.

According to the National Nursing Forum’s international keynote speaker, Professor Anne Marie Rafferty - an expert on health service reform in the United Kingdom - nurses as leaders must not only do things right, they must also do the right things to achieve sustainable change in policy, systems, workplace culture and workforce retention.

“In a highly pressurised health system, the need for nurse leaders is huge. Strong leadership by nurses plays a pivotal role in a system that makes enormous demands upon practitioners. The skills
and expertise that nurses have means they are in a position to lead change in health care systems, be the designers of better care models and processes, as well as deliver better health outcomes for patients and their families," stated Professor Rafferty.

In convening an annual National Nursing Forum, the Australian College of Nursing’s goal is to raise the profile of the importance of developing and enhancing leadership skills in nurses at all stages of their career – from the nursing student and graduate nurse through to the experienced nurse in a senior executive position. ACN believes that every nurse can have a positive impact on patient safety and health care outcomes, not only through the delivery of front line services but also in shaping and leading the development of new models of care needed to meet future health care demands.

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For interviews or for any other media enquiries please contact Diana Abeleven at Zadro on 02 9212 7867 or diana@zadroagency.com.au

Kathleen McLaughlin, Acting CEO of ACN
National Nursing Forum’s international keynote speaker, Professor Anne Marie Rafferty.

Notes to the Editors:

ACN, an organisation not afraid to intelligently challenge industry issues affecting the nursing profession or Australia’s healthcare, is a well-connected and educated national body that drives change with people of influence to enhance the delivery of health services to the Australian community. ACN advances the skills and expertise of nurses to provide leadership in their contribution to the policy, practice and delivery of health care.

A membership organisation with members in all states and territories, health care settings and nursing specialties, ACN’s membership includes many nurses in roles of influence, including senior nurses, organisational leaders, academics and researchers.
What is the role of the ACN to media?

- ACN provides trusted, well supported information about Australia’s health care system, the delivery of health care, nursing leadership and the nursing profession.
- ACN has a number of media-savvy spokespeople within the organisation who can comment on Australia’s health care system, the delivery of health care, nursing leadership and the nursing profession.
- ACN offers media with an alternative voice to that of an industrial relations perspective.
- ACN is in-the-know and can comment on health care matters of interest.
- ACN can respond to media requests in a timely manner and with subject/clinical expert’s available on-hand for further discussion.
- ACN regularly respond to government updates pertaining to Australia’s health care system.

What role does the ACN play?

The ACN are here to act and deliver results as agents of change. They are working towards a brighter future through advancing nurse leadership to enhance the delivery of health care to all.

The organisation provides nurse leaders with access to relevant information, support and education will enhance Australia’s reputation on the world stage.

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