

27 July 2016

Registered nurses needed to protect safety of aged care residents

Today, the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) announced the publication of its position statement on *The role of registered nurses in residential aged care facilities* that unambiguously supports the requirement for registered nurses (RNs) to be present within residential aged care facilities (RACFs) at all times.

The new position statement outlines ACN's expectation that regulation of RACFs should at a minimum mandate a requirement that an RN be on-site and available at all times to promote the safety and well-being of residents. ACN's statement recognises that there is a need to ensure that RACFs can support the growing pattern of frailty and dependence amongst residential aged care populations.

"The growing prevalence of co-morbidities associated with physical and cognitive decline amongst our older populations presents a significant challenge for residential aged care. If services are to meet the increasingly complex care needs of older adults living in residential aged care, the expertise of RNs must be available on a 24/7 basis," said ACN's CEO, Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN.

"RNs are typically the clinical leaders in residential aged care, they possess the required clinical and managerial expertise to coordinate and deliver safe and high quality nursing care. RNs are needed on a continuous basis to ensure timely access to nursing assessment and comprehensive nursing care, and if quality and safety in residential aged care is to be assured, their role cannot be substituted by any other category of health care worker," she said.

ACN's position statement explains the fundamental link between nursing skill-mix and the delivery of appropriate care. ACN firmly believes that in order to promote safety and quality, nursing care in residential aged care must be led by RNs who uniquely possess the nursing surveillance and intervention skills required to care for older adults with complex care needs.

Older adults living in residential aged care facilities rightfully expect and are entitled to safe evidence-based professional nursing services led and managed by RNs. ACN's position statement therefore supports the strong view that the regulation of RACFs should at a minimum mandate a requirement for an RN to be on-site and available at all times.

The ACN position statement on *The role of registered nurses in residential aged care facilities* is available [here](#).

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Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward, CEO of ACN.



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The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is the national professional organisation for all nurse leaders and its aim is to ensure that the Australian community receives quality nursing care now and in the future. ACN is a membership organisation with members in all states and territories, health care settings and nursing specialties. ACN is also the Australian member of the International Council of Nurses headquartered in Geneva.

ACN, an organisation not afraid to intelligently challenge industry issues affecting the nursing profession or Australia's health care, 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 specialities, ACN's membership includes many nurses in roles of influence, including senior nurses, organisational leaders, academics and researchers.

What is the role of 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 responds to government updates pertaining to Australia's health care system.

What role does ACN play?

ACN is 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 that will enhance Australia's reputation on the world stage.



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