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REFORM BENEFITS MUST BE MAXIMISED

The major reform in funding for home care services which starts today, has the potential to improve quality and choice for older Australians – as long as the transition process is effectively managed.

“Flexibility, including portability, will be the big wins for consumers,” Australian College of Nursing Chief Executive Officer, Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward commended. “Giving older people more choice in the way services are delivered in their homes can keep them independent and healthier longer. ACN welcomes the Australian Government’s commitment to improving home care services.”

However, while increased competition may drive improvements in service quality, it can also impact on capacity.

“We need to ensure providers are not unduly incentivised to drive down costs,” Adjunct Professor Ward warned. “These reforms need to keep qualified, vetted care providers, including trained nurses, at the centre of service delivery.

“ACN will be closely watching to ensure the reforms do not lead to ‘pop-up’ service providers who suddenly appear in the marketplace because it seems like there are easy profits to be made.”

One key way to prevent a decline in service quality is to ensure older Australians and their families are well-informed on the level of care they should expect from their service provider.

“We hope this change will drive innovation and lead to more personalised services,” Adjunct Professor Ward said. “However, we are cognisant that when similar funding changes have been made in other areas, such as disability support, providers with long histories of excellence have found the transition challenging, with their sustainability put at risk.

“There cannot be significant payment delays during the transition process or huge costs for providers associated with the change.

“The Government must do all it can to support those currently providing high quality services to manage this change so they can keep their doors open and maintain their current standards of care.

“As the Minister said when launching this new system today, older Australians helped make our nation what it is today. There must be assurances that they won’t be worse off.”

The Australian College of Nursing is also concerned the benefits of the reforms may not be fairly shared across the community, including in rural and remote areas where access to services may be limited.

“With a number of significant health care reforms coming online, including the NDIS and aged care deregulation, there is also likely to be increased competition and this could result in skills shortages across the country. It highlights the need to continue to train and retain adequate numbers of nurses in the health workforce,” Adjunct Professor Ward concluded.

“Government must work closely with all stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition and ensure no consumer is disadvantaged.”

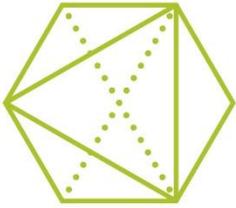
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Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward, CEO of ACN.



Australian College of Nursing

Advancing nurse leadership

Notes to Editors:

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 specialties, 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.

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- 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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