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PLAN TO COMBAT ELDER ABUSE STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) has applauded a recommendation by the Australian Law Reform Commission to develop a national plan to combat abuse to elderly Australians.

The recommendation was handed down as part of the Commission's report, *Elder Abuse – A National Legal Response*, released on Wednesday.

The report includes 43 recommendations for law reform to safeguard older people from abuse and support their wishes through a variety of measures. These include improved responses to elder abuse in residential aged care, enhanced employment screening of care workers and greater scrutiny relating to restrictive practices in aged care.

The report's release is timely, given World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is on June 15. The focus of this year's awareness initiative was to prevent financial exploitation in the context of elder abuse to maintain older peoples' human rights.

"Nurses are first and foremost patient advocates and act in the best interest of their patients - they do not profit at their expense, they do not betray their confidence and at all times the patient comes first," ACN Chief Executive Officer, Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward, said.

"We welcome the recommendation that the Commonwealth Department of Health should commission an independent evaluation of research on optimal staffing models and levels in aged care and we reiterate that there must be a legislated minimum number of registered nurses (RNs) in residential aged care."

ACN is concerned by the trend in the makeup of the aged care workforce, which has seen a reduction in the proportion of regulated health professionals working directly at the bedside.¹

"All residents in residential aged care have a right to the highest level of care, which can only be provided by an appropriately-skilled workforce, which includes an RN being onsite and available 24/7," Adjunct Professor Ward said.

To view a summary of the report click [here](#) or to read the full 432-page report click [here](#).

-ENDS-

¹ Debra King et al, *The aged care workforce 2012: final report*, Australian Government Department of Health (2012) <<http://apo.org.au/node/33009>>.



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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.

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