



Australian College of Nursing

REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN HEALTHCARE & HOSPITALS (AHHA) POSITION STATEMENTS

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) feedback to the AHHA for
review of their position statements

(January 2018)

AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF NURSING FEEDBACK FOR REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN HEALTHCARE & HOSPITALS (AHHA) POSITION STATEMENTS

General Comment

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on AHHA's review of their position statements. AHHA plays an important role in voicing the need for universal, high quality, health care in Australia. ACN's vision is aligned with AHHA's in that both organisations want the best possible health care system in Australia; part of such a system is support for health care professionals, especially nurses. ACN believes that in the current health environment the policy work of our organisations has a vital role.

Feedback on position statements

1) Current position statements:

- **Relevance and usefulness in current health care environment**
- **Relationship to ACN views and statements, or opportunity to collaborate**

AHHA's position statements cover a wide variety of topics, from cultural safety to social determinants of health, unhealthy food consumption, and even chronic diseases. These statements are very relevant to the environment the health sector is currently facing and they are very useful in giving voice to the challenges and needs of public hospitals and health care. The position statements are very clear, concise and comprehensive. ACN strongly believes in the need for policy initiatives to strengthen the health industry and support health professionals such as nurses in order to provide high-quality health care to patients. ACN shares AHHA's views in many of the position statements and would firstly begin by recommending that AHHA further strengthen these statements by making use of the wide breadth valuable research on these topics that is available and providing references for sources used. In this way, these position statements will be supported by renowned research and will be seen as more reliable and trustworthy by readers.

AHHA's position statement on *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* strongly focuses on the role of government funding and policies that need to be implemented to improve current conditions. ACN agrees with AHHA's position on the need for sustained action in this area of health. In a joint statement on the topic on 'cultural safety', ACN, along with four other professional nursing and midwifery bodies, discussed the inequities experienced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples¹. This statement focused on the idea that all health care leaders have a role to play in closing the gap in health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, specifically the role of nurses and midwives as the largest workforce in the health care system.

ACN is in agreement with AHHA's position that a national standard on culturally competent health care should be developed to reduce racism and increase respect and a culturally safe health care system. Instead of only focusing on additional funding, AHHA's statement could include more detail on the role of hospitals and health care administration and management, as well as health professionals. It should also include a discussion on the 2018 Implementation Plan report 'My Life My Lead', released in December 2018², to provide a more detailed picture of the current environment and needs. Additionally, the position statement could benefit to make mention of and discuss the 'closing the gap 2018' report tabled by Prime Minister Turnbull in February 2018³.

¹ Cusack, L., Kinnear, A., Ward, K., Mohammad, J., Butler, A., 2018, *Cultural safety: Nurses and midwives leading the way for safer health care*, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, retrieved 23 January 2019, <<https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/news/2018-03-23-joint-statement.aspx>>

² Department of Health, 2018, *Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023*, Australian Government Department of Health, retrieved 21 January 2019, <<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/indigenous-implementation-plan>>

³ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018, *Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2018*, Australian Government Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, retrieved 22 January 2019, <<https://closingthegap.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/ctg-report-2018.pdf>>

One of the most important concerns in the current health care environment is Australia's ageing population and the increasing demand on health care services as a result. AHHA's position statement on *Aged Care* looks at this issue and its impact on the health sector holistically, including current government expenditure, plans and strategies. The major focus is on the problem of access to care, wait times, quality of care, workforce shortages and government funding towards programs. ACN is in complete agreement of AHHA's position, having also presented views on these concerns in a submission to a senate inquiry on the *Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce*⁴.

ACN presented recommendations that related to the role of nurses, increasing demand for nurses and the part their education and training will play in a future workforce strategy focused on aged care needs⁵. Considering the vital role nurses play in aged care, specifically in residential aged care, AHHA can collaborate these recommendations with other workforce strategy thoughts. This can be in addition to or as an update to AHHA's *Health Workforce* position statement. ACN believes additional research and detail is required to develop AHHA's position and recommendations for the future of aged care. ACN has also presented detailed ideas about strategies and concerns in a submission to the Aged Care Legislated Review, looking at some of the concerns also highlighted by AHHA in their position statement, including 'means-testing' and data sources to establish unmet community need⁶. A few additional issues that AHHA could look at within this submission include disadvantaged groups (such as Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island People), older people and the major issue of Elder Abuse, and End-of-Life care etc.

All of the issues discussed above underpin the overall foundational issues in Australia's current health system, as well as the need for reform of this system. AHHA has released five main position statements that discuss the current condition of the health system, challenges it is facing and its need for reform, these are: *Integrated Care, Universal Healthcare, and Efficiency in the Health System, Reform of Health System Funding and Principles for an Optimal Healthcare System*. ACN and AHHA both believe the health care system is currently unsustainable, as demand for health care services is rapidly rising, accessibility and quality of services are already presenting a challenge, and health care is exceeding funding and workforce capacity. The growing ageing population, as well as increased consumer expectations and use of technology is exhausting the health care system. The need for reform is real and immediate.

These position statements by AHHA are comprehensive and highly relevant to the current climate; however, all of these statements have been released from mid-2016 to late-2017 at different times. They are all relevant to one another yet because of being released at different times, seem fragmented. It would be beneficial for a reader to have a longer

⁴ Australian College of Nursing, 2016, *Senate Committee Inquiry - Future of Australia's Aged Care Workforce*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 18 January 2019, <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/20160324_acn_future_of_australias_aged_care_sector_submission_final.pdf>

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Australian College of Nursing, 2016, *ACN Submission to Aged Care Legislated Review Consultation*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 18 January 2019, <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/aged_care_legislated_review.pdf>

position statement or discussion paper that includes the information within all of these position statements, as well as any updates since the last one was released in 2017. It needs to be comprehensive and integrated and flow together to give a complete picture, without repetition. Additionally, it can have an analysis of what efforts the government has made and is planning on making such as the COAG National Health Reform Agreement in 2011⁷, as well as what changes have occurred in the health environment, and what international literature and research tell us about optimal healthcare.

AHHA states in *Efficiency in the Health System* that greater use of electronic health records and innovative technologies is critical to improving care and efficiency. ACN and AHHA have both expressed need for more detailed data sources on health services. AHHA should expand on the need for technological advances in services, digital health, data sources as well as cover the topic of My Health Record in an additional position statement; however, technology and digital services will not solve all problems.

The ACN White Paper *Nurses are essential in health and aged care reform*⁸, broadly outlines the valuable role that nurses play in health and aged care, and the importance of a strong nursing voice in achieving person-centred and sustainable reform. Comprising over 50% of the health workforce, and having the most contact and influence at the point of care, nurses have a unique insight into, and direct impact on the success of policy and must play a central role in the reform agenda. Our nursing profession is highly educated, flexible, fiscally accountable and responsive to patient and community needs. Rated as the most highly regarded and trusted of all professions, nurses utilise public confidence to guide consumer experience, enhance primary health care capacity and reach, and have the greatest impact on the success or failure of health and aged care reform. It is important to collaborate with and consider the perspective and expertise of health professionals in health reforms. AHHA policy work and position statements can benefit from including this insight to promote efficiency at every level in health.

Another interesting area of concern and study in the health industry presently is ways and strategies to deal with chronic diseases. AHHA's position statement on *Chronic diseases*, as well as related position statements on *Preventive Health*, *Social Determinants of Health*, *Reducing Salt Consumption*, and *Sugar Sweetened Beverages*, all centre around the idea of reducing harmful consumption of unhealthy foods and improving our daily lives and routines with regards to social determinants of health to mitigate preventable illnesses or chronic diseases. All of these statements are up-to-date, covering most things relevant in this area. ACN agrees with AHHA's position on chronic diseases, advocating for effort from all levels of government, as well as the Private Health Insurers (PHIs), Primary Health Networks (PHNs) within their roles. AHHA presents their position on the role of PHIs and PHNs in three separate position statements as well; however, updates are required to these due to the

⁷ Council of Australian Governments, 2011, *National Health Reform agreement 2011*, State Government of Victoria Department of Health and Human Services, retrieved 22 January 2019, <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/national-health-reform-agreement-2011>>

⁸ Australian College of Nursing (ACN), 2016, *Nurses are Essential in Health and Aged Care Reform: A White Paper* by ACN 2016, ACN, Canberra.

changes that have taken place with regard to health cover and PHIs, as well as the reforms that have been announced⁹.

ACN supports these views and believes all of these position statements are relevant and useful; however, additional detail on strategies, ideas and recommendations would be beneficial. Like AHHA, ACN also calls for a strong, well-connected and well-resourced primary health care system and investment in preventive health programs. Chronic Disease has been a major area of study at ACN, with one policy chapter solely dedicated for discussion around it. ACN has also made a joint submission, with four prestigious health professional bodies, to the standing committee on health¹⁰. This submission made many significant recommendations and also presented well-researched ideas, some of which are found in AHHA's position statements as well; however, AHHA's position statements could benefit from this submission in adding detail, research and additional recommendations to the discussed subjects. Because of the brief nature of AHHA's position statements, it appears current recommendations are generic and only surface-level, and some more explanation, research and discussion could be added.

ACN also agrees with AHHA's position statement on *Climate Change and Health*, including the need for policy initiatives and implementation of strategies to combat negative effects of climate change and environment on health. ACN has presented similar ideas in their position statement on *Climate change and the nursing profession*¹¹, in addition to ideas specifically referring to the nursing profession. Another topic of shared views among ACN and AHHA is *Community Health and Community Pharmacy Agreement*. ACN also believes in the importance of community health in reducing hospitalisations and ensuring optimal health outcomes for people¹². These position statements are a great addition to the work of AHHA and are very informative and useful in the current health environment.

In addition to these, AHHA's views in position statements: *Health Care Homes, Hospital in the Home* and *Health Workforce* can be collaborated with or benefit from the nursing perspective, as ACN presents the importance of nurses in the health profession in general and specifically in residential care and health care homes^{13,14}. Nurses have a core role in health care and healthy ageing, and thus must be considered as an important aspect in discussion of the workforce and strategies of health care.

⁹ Department of Health, 2017, *Private Health Insurance 2017 Reforms*, Australian Government Department of Health, retrieved 23 January 2019, <<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/private-health-insurance-reform>>

¹⁰ McLaughlin, K., Mohammad, J., Grant, J., Ryan, K., Hunt, A., 2015, *Submission to the Australian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health: Inquiry into best practice in chronic disease prevention and management in primary health care*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 22 January 2019, <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/final_submission_august_6th_v5.pdf>

¹¹ Australian College of Nursing, 2017, *Climate and the Nursing Profession*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 21 January 2019, <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/PS_Climate_and_the_nursing_profession_C1.pdf>

¹² Australian College of Nursing, 2015, *Community and Primary Health Care Nursing*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 22 January 2019, <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/community_and_primary_health_care_position_statement_c3.pdf>

¹³ Australian College of Nursing, 2015, *Inquiry into registered nurses in New South Wales nursing homes*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 22 January, <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ACN_submission_inquiry_into_RNs_in_NSW_nursing_homes.pdf>

¹⁴ Australian College of Nursing, 2016, *Senate Committee Inquiry - Future of Australia's Aged Care Workforce*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 18 January 2019, <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/20160324_acn_future_of_australias_aged_care_sector_submission_final.pdf>

AHHA's position statements on *Mental Health* and *Palliative Care* are likewise very informative and relevant; however, the palliative care position statement does not currently cover the issue of voluntary assisted dying which is quite relevant in the current health environment^{15,16}. With regard to mental health, AHHA should consider updating existing position statement or releasing a new one on the issue of accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia as it is a significant current concern. ACN's recent submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee on this is quite detailed and can be referred to among other sources¹⁷. AHHA's position statement on *Marriage Equality and Health* also requires an update according to new legislation amendment to the Marriage Act in Australia¹⁸.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Use reliable research to support position statements and provide references
2. Include more detail and explanation in the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health* statement
3. Collaborate ACN's recommendations relating to the role of nurses, as well as additional areas of interest such as Elder Abuse, into the *Aged Care* and the *Health Workforce* position statements
4. Formulate a combined position statement of *Integrated Care, Universal Health care, Efficiency in the Health System, Reform of Health System Funding and Principles for an Optimal Health care System* and include more detail, as well as the health professionals and nursing perspective.
5. Expand their views in *Efficiency in the Health System* on use of greater technology, data sources and innovation in digital health to improve care and efficiency, in a new position statement
6. Update position statement on *Private Health Insurance* with changes that have taken place in health cover and PHIs, as well as the reforms that have been announced
7. Benefit from ACN's work on chronic diseases with other health professional bodies and update *Chronic Diseases* and other relevant position statements accordingly
8. Consider making use of ACN's presented nursing perspective and role with regard to position statements on *Health Care Homes, Hospital in the Home* and *Health Workforce*
9. Consider adding the subject of voluntary assisted dying to *Palliative Care* statement or making a new position statement on the subject
10. Consider adding the subject of accessibility and quality of mental services in rural and remote Australia to *Mental Health* statement or making a new position statement on the subject
11. Update position statement on *Marriage Equality and Health* according to new legislation amendment to the Marriage Act in Australia.

¹⁵ Australian College of Nursing, 2018, *Voluntary Assisted Dying in Victoria*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 21 January 2019, <<https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Voluntary-Assisted-Dying-in-Victoria.pdf>>

¹⁶ Parliament of Victoria, 2016, *Parliament of Victoria Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee: Inquiry into end of life choices, Final report*, Parliament of Victoria, retrieved 24 January 2019, <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/SCLSI/EOL_Report/LSIC_58-05_Text_WEB.pdf>

¹⁷ Australian College of Nursing, 2018, *Accessibility and quality of mental health services in rural and remote Australia*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 18 January 2019, <<https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/20180512-rural-and-remote-mental-health-acn-response.pdf>>

¹⁸ Attorney-General's Department, 2017, *Marriage Equality in Australia*, Australian Government Attorney-General's Department, retrieved 18 January 2019, <<https://www.ag.gov.au/marriageequality>>

2) Other ideas and topics of interest AHHA can release position statements on.

Following are some suggestions for new position statements based on some of ACN's work that may also be relevant to AHHA, as well as some topics relevant to current health environment in Australia:

- Current challenges being faced by some hospitals, such as South Australian hospitals exceeding budgets and the audits and new administration following that¹⁹, as well as security issues and services issues in certain NSW hospitals²⁰.
- Staff Shortage²¹ and workforce planning issues in general and specifically in South Australian hospitals^{22,23}
- Migrant and refugee health and being culturally responsive²⁴.
- Administration of therapeutic goods, such as medicinal cannabis²⁵.
- Safety of health professionals, specifically emergency personnel²⁶.
- Cosmetic treatment and procedures, with recent incidents of unqualified surgeons performing botched operations^{27,28}
- Bullying and fatigue in hospitals and health care has become a very big issue, leading to SA parliamentary inquiry into this issue²⁹. ACN is in the process of making a submission to this inquiry and has also released a position statement on *Bullying in the workplace* in the past³⁰

¹⁹ Siebert, B 2018, 'Government unveils "dramatic" \$276m health turnaround plan', Adelaide's Independent News InDaily 26 November, p.1, retrieved 16 January 2016, <<https://indaily.com.au/news/2018/11/26/govt-unveils-dramatic-276m-health-turnaround-plan/>>

²⁰ Chung, L., 2019, *Woman arrested after allegedly stabbing a man in the back at Sydney hospital*, The Sydney Morning Herald, retrieved 23 January, <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/woman-arrested-after-allegedly-stabbing-a-man-in-the-back-at-sydney-hospital-20190123-p50t04.html>>

²¹ O'Sullivan, M., 2018, *Staff shortage forces Northern Beaches Hospital to 'cancel surgeries'*, The Sydney Morning Herald, retrieved 23 January, <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/staff-shortage-forces-northern-beaches-hospital-to-cancel-surgeries-20181118-p50ggm.html>>

²² Washington, D., 2018, *Leaked SA Health review: Staff shortages, "sub-standard" systems and "fractured relationships"*, Adelaide's Independent News InDaily 26 November, p.1, retrieved 16 January 2016, <<https://indaily.com.au/news/2018/10/16/leaked-sa-health-review-staff-shortages-sub-standard-systems-and-fractured-relationships/>>

²³ Hanifie, S., 2018, *South Australia regional areas experiencing widespread doctor shortage crisis*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation News, retrieved 24 January 2019, <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-11/south-australia-widespread-doctor-shortage/10603852>>

²⁴ Australian College of Nursing, 2018, *ACN submission to the Migrant and Refugee Women's Health Partnership on the Draft Competency Standards Framework for 'Culturally responsive clinical practice: Working with people from migrant and refugee backgrounds'*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved, 18 January 2019, <<https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/20180426-cultural-competencies-refugee-health-consultation.pdf>>

²⁵ Australian College of Nursing, 2017, *ACN Submission to Department of Health Chronic Pain Medicinal Cannabis Guidance Consultation*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 18 January 2019, <<https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/australian-college-of-nursing-submission-to-department-of-health-chronic-pain-medicinal-cannabis-guidance-consultation.pdf>>

²⁶ Australian College of Nursing, 2017, *Submission on Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Violence Against Emergency Personnel*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 18 January 2019, <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/20160718_inquiryintoviolenceemergencypersonel_final.pdf>

²⁷ Sullivan, R., 2018, *NSW parliamentary inquiry into cosmetic surgery clinic*, News Pty Ltd, retrieved 23 January 2019, <<https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/beauty/cosmetic-surgery/nsw-parliamentary-inquiry-into-cosmetic-surgery-clinic-advertising-boob-jobs-for-cost-of-a-coffee-a-day/news-story/3eb0dd412143318ac27e18a5478c5a4d>>

²⁸ Parliament of New South Wales, 2018, *Cosmetic Health Service Complaints in New South Wales*, Parliament of New South Wales, retrieved 24 January 2019, <<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2476>>

²⁹ Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, 2018, *Inquiry into Workplace Bullying and Fatigue in SA hospitals and health services*, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation SA Branch, retrieved 23 January 2019, <<https://www.anmfsa.org.au/news-archive/inquiry-into-workplace-bullying-and-fatigue-in-sa-hospitals-and-health-services/>>

³⁰ Australian College of Nursing, 2016, *Bullying in the Workplace: Position Statement*, Australian College of Nursing, retrieved 18 January 2019, <https://acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ps_bullying_in_the_workplace_c2-1.pdf>