

MEDIA RELEASE

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ACN welcomes Senate report on universal access to reproductive healthcare

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) today called on the Government to work with nursing groups and leaders to increase access to reproductive healthcare in Australia, following the release of the Senate Community Affairs References Committee report on its Inquiry into Universal Reproductive Healthcare.

The Committee's report, *Ending the postcode lottery: Addressing barriers to sexual, maternity and reproductive healthcare in Australia*, found that Australians do not currently have consistent access to sexual, reproductive and maternal healthcare services, and that this particularly disadvantages people living in regional and remote Australia.

ACN CEO Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN welcomed the Senate inquiry's findings that highlight the critical role Australia's nursing workforce plays in the delivery of high quality and safe reproductive healthcare.

"We were pleased to have had the opportunity to provide evidence to the committee and we're grateful to have seen a number of our recommendations adopted by the Senators involved," Adjunct Professor Ward said.

"We look forward to working with governments both at the federal and state level to ensure that the committee's recommendations are adopted in full and in a timely manner."

"Ensuring equitable access to sexual, maternity and reproductive health care in this country is too important to play politics with, and we were heartened to see the strong multi-partisan political support during this committee process."

A series of recommendations from the Senate committee reinforce the evidence that ACN provided during the inquiry. These recommendations include:

- **Recommendation 2** The committee recommends that the National Scope of Practice Review considers, as a priority, opportunities and incentives for all health professionals working in the field of sexual and reproductive healthcare to work to their full scope of practice in a clinically safe way.
- **Recommendation 5** The committee recommends that the Australian Government ensures that there is adequate remuneration, through Medicare, for general practitioners, nurses, and midwives to provide contraceptive administration services, including the insertion and removal of long-acting reversible contraceptives.

- **Recommendation 12** The committee recommends that the Australian, state, and territory governments ensure that maternity care services, including birthing services, in non-metropolitan public hospitals are available and accessible for all pregnant women at the time they require them. This is particularly important for women in rural and regional areas.
- **Recommendation 19** The committee recommends that the Australian Government continues current Medicare Benefits Schedule telehealth items for sexual and reproductive healthcare, including pregnancy support counselling and termination care.
- **Recommendation 24** The committee recommends that the Australian Government work with the relevant medical and professional colleges to support the development and delivery of training to health practitioners providing sexual, reproductive and maternal healthcare on: engaging and communicating with people with disability; providing culturally aware and trauma-informed services to culturally and linguistically diverse migrants and refugees; and ensuring culturally safe healthcare for First Nations people in mainstream non-community-controlled organisations, by ensuring practitioners are aware of intergenerational trauma, cultural norms and taboos.

ACN was also pleased that the committee recognised the importance of trauma-informed and culturally appropriate delivery of services.

The committee report noted that *'Members of the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) raised concerns that there is a clear lack of trauma-informed training throughout tertiary education. They advised that numerous healthcare providers are not providing sufficient reproductive healthcare to refugee and migrant women'* (p.92) and went on to say *'ACN argued for improved cultural competency training whilst studying, as well as ensuring this training continues once qualified as a health practitioner'* (p.92).

ACN will continue to advocate on behalf Australia's nursing profession, and we remain committed to shaping the policies of the future.

For more information:

Alex Woods 0432 044 966

Email: acn.media@acn.edu.au

Notes to Editors:

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is the national professional organisation for all nurses 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 in collaboration with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF). An organisation not afraid to challenge industry issues affecting the nursing profession or Australia's health care, ACN 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's membership includes nurses in roles of influence, including senior nurses, organisational leaders, academics, and researchers.

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CEO - Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN - Bio

Kylie Ward. Policy Reformer. Nurse. For-Purpose Leader. Equality Warrior. Adjunct Professor. Transformation Specialist.

Kylie is the CEO of Australian College of Nursing. She has led a program of transformation at ACN, which has now become Australia's beacon for Nurse Leadership.

Kylie holds honorary academic appointments with seven leading Australian universities and in 2017, Kylie won Telstra Businesswoman of the Year in ACT for Purpose and Social Enterprise.

She is a major policy influencer, advocate for women, children and equality.