Australian College of Nursing

NATIONAL NURSING WORKFORCE STRATEGY

Australian College of Nursing's response to the National Nursing Workforce Strategy consultation

Contents

Foreward

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is the national voice of the nursing profession, focused on policy, advocacy and education to advance the status, recognition and respect for nurses. We are committed to our intent of 'Shaping Health, Advancing Nursing' to enhance the health care of all Australians.

We welcome the development of the National Nursing Workforce Strategy, which aims to create a national strategic approach to nursing policy that addresses the current and future challenges and opportunities for the nursing workforce. We believe that this strategy is vital for ensuring that nurses can work to their full scope of practice and deliver person-centred, evidence-based and compassionate care to Australian communities across all sectors and settings.

As the largest health profession in Australia, comprising over 40% of the health workforce, nurses play a key role in meeting the diverse and complex health and aged care needs of the population. Nurses provide high-quality care and perform key functions across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas, as well as in emerging and innovative models of care. Nurses also contribute to health promotion, prevention, education, research and leadership.

However, the nursing workforce faces significant challenges which requires a coordinated and collaborative response from all stakeholders, including governments, regulators, educators, employers, professional bodies, unions, and most importantly, nurses themselves.

ACN is proud to be a partner and a collaborator in the development of the National Nursing Workforce Strategy. We have engaged with our members, fellows, students, affiliates and the broader nursing community to provide input and feedback on the strategy. We have also participated in the consultation process, including face-to-face workshops, webinars and surveys. We have shared our insights, experiences, perspectives and recommendations on how to address the nursing workforce issues and identify opportunities for improvement.

We look forward to seeing the final outcome of the National Nursing Workforce Strategy and working with all stakeholders to implement the actions and recommendations. We believe that this strategy will be a landmark achievement for the nursing profession and a catalyst for positive change and innovation. We hope that this strategy will inspire and empower nurses to shape health and advance nursing for the benefit of all Australians.

The growing need in aged care services

1.   What effect will the ageing population have on the nursing workforce needs of tomorrow?

As the Australian population ages, the healthcare workforce will need to be trained to meet the unique and complex requirements of the elderly. Nurses will need to manage their aging patients' physical and mental health needs, as well as the rapidly changing technology being used to enhance their care.[1]

The aged care sector in Australia is growing fast, with 3.5 million Australians predicted to be accessing aged care by 2050.[2] The already high demand for aged care nurses will continue to grow and the predicted workforce will need to triple its current size to almost one million in the next 30 years just to meet demand.[3]

The aged care workforce is currently stretched to capacity, therefore high priority must be given to recruitment and retention strategies. Recruitment strategies need to focus on transition to practice programs for both newly graduated nurses and experienced nurses seeking to move their career into the aged care sector. For recruitment strategies to be enticing, there needs to be pay parity and working conditions that are aligned with the health care sector. To boost retention strategies, there needs to be a clear career structure in aged care with opportunities and support for career advancement.

Consideration also needs be given to the aging nursing workforce. There are currently 154,002 nurses aged 50 years and over, registered with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Board; representing 35% of all general practicing nurses.[4] The Australian Government predicts a shortage of 85,000 nurses by 2025 and 123,000 nurses in Australia by 2030. Given Australia's ageing population, and subsequent rise in chronic disease prevalence, it is critical that nurses be empowered to work to meet the healthcare needs of the nation.[5] An aging nursing workforce imposes challenges for the nursing workforce including:

- **Physical difficulties:** older nurses may experience mobility impairment, or health issues that affect their ability to perform manual tasks such as lifting patients, moving equipment, or standing for long periods.
- **Tiredness and fatigue:** older nurses may feel fatigued when managing heavier and more complex patient loads, long shifts, or night work. This may impair concentration, decision-making, or safety.
- **Treatment difference:** older nurses may face discrimination, stereotyping, or marginalisation from their younger colleagues, managers, or employers. They may be

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[1] https://healthtimes.com.au/hub/aged-care/2/news/nc1/australias-ageing-population-and-its-impact-on-nursing/6002/

[2] Australian aged care sector analysis 2023 - KPMG Australia

[3] Graham Elizabeth M., Duffield Christine (2010) An ageing nursing workforce. Australian Health Review 34, 44-48.

[4] Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia - Statistics (nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au)

[5] https://www.apna.asn.au/about/media/aged-care-nurses-underutilised-despite-workforce-shortage---survey

perceived as less competent, less adaptable, or less willing to learn new skills or technologies.

- **Lack of respect and opportunities:** older nurses may feel undervalued, unappreciated, or overlooked for recognition, promotion, or education opportunities. They may also lack support, feedback, or mentoring from their peers or leaders.
- **Workforce shortage:** older nurses may retire earlier than expected due to these challenges. This may create a gap in the supply of skilled and experienced workers in the aged care sector, which is already facing a growing demand due to the aging population.[6][7][8]

Solutions to these challenges include effective strategies from individuals, organisational, and policy levels to support older nurses to continue working to their full potential and contribute to the health care system. Some of the strategies are:

- **Physical adjustments:** Providing ergonomic equipment, flexible work arrangements, reduced workloads, or modified duties for older nurses to accommodate their physical needs and preferences.
- **Wellness programs:** Offering wellness programs, health checks, counselling services, or stress management interventions for older nurses to enhance their physical and mental well-being.
- **Diversity and inclusion:** Promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion in the workplace that respects and values the contributions of older nurses. Providing training, A , or awareness campaigns to address ageism and discrimination among staff and managers.
- **Recognition and reward**: Recognising and rewarding older nurses for their expertise, experience, and loyalty. Providing career development opportunities, leadership roles, or mentoring programs for older nurses and midwives to enhance their skills and confidence.
- **Retention and recruitment**: Encouraging older nurses to stay in the workforce longer by offering incentives, benefits, or support. Attracting younger people to the profession by improving the image, conditions, and prospects of nursing. [9][10]

Solutions should also include phased retirement options for nurses, allowing a gradual reduction in work hours while maintaining benefits, could support the adjustment process. A transition to retirement plan is outlined in the response to question 12.

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[6] Denton, J., Evans, D., & Xu, Q. (2021). Being an older nurse or midwife in the healthcare workplace–A qualitative descriptive study. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 77(11), 4500-4510.

[7] Matters, E. (2019). Healthy ageing in the nursing workforce. *The Hive* https://www.acn.edu.au/the-hive-2019/healthy-ageing-nursing-workforce

[8] Denton, J., Evans, D., & Xu, Q. (2021). Being an older nurse or midwife in the healthcare workplace–A qualitative descriptive study. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 77(11), 4500-4510.

[9] Denton, J., Evans, D., & Xu, Q. (2021). Older nurses and midwives in the workplace: A scoping review. *Collegian*, *28*(2), 222-229.

[10] Pagone, G., & Briggs, L. (2021). Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia

The regional, rural and remote nursing workforce

2. How do we grow, support and sustain the regional, rural and remote nursing workforce?

Health inequalities prevail in Australia; rural and remote people carry a heavier burden of disease than urban Australians. Nurses are often the only primary healthcare provider in rural and remote communities, and the care they provide is by fewer resources.[11] Nursing in regional, rural, and remote Australia can be challenging due to the lack of resources and the distance from major cities.

However, there are approaches that can be implemented to support and grow the nursing workforce. This includes providing supportive student placements, working to full scope of practice, and linking career pathways that go beyond a limited rural departmental or organizational level (e.g., local, regional, across public and private sectors).

Undergraduate clinical placements

To enhance growth in the regional, rural and remote nursing workforce, greater support to undergraduate nursing students on clinical placement is required. Undergraduate nursing students are required to complete a minimum of 800 hours of clinical placement to successfully register as a nurse in Australia[12]. Nationally, clinical placements are unpaid. Amid a cost-of-living crisis, clinical placements, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas, are putting an increased financial strain on many students impacting their overall health.

ACN members of the Emerging Nurses Leaders Program reported that The University of Sydney fund some nursing rural placements, but not all universities offer this opportunity[13]. Positive student rural clinical placements can be a powerful tool for addressing the lack of qualified workers in rural healthcare institutions. Supervisors who can mentor students, expose them to various situations, start learning and teaching activities, and give timely and appropriate feedback are essential elements for successful student placements. Because of the significant differences between rural and urban practice environments, effective placements with the assistance of host organisations, supervisors, and students are required to guarantee that everyone involved has a positive placement experience.[14]

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[11] The National Rural and Remote Nursing Generalist Framework 2023–2027 | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care

[12] ANMAC (2020). Updated ANMAC communication to education providers 1 September 2020. ANMAC Communique. 1 September 2020. https://www.anmac.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/professional_experience_placement_during_covid_19_pandemic_-_update.pdf

[13] UTS (2019). Nursing student experiences rural placement. https://www.sydney.edu.au/medicine-health/news-and-events/2019/08/19/going-rural-nursing-placement-in-orange.html

[14] Coe, S., Marlow, A., & Mather, C. (2020). Whole of Community Facilitators: An Exemplar for Supporting Rural Health Workforce Recruitment through Students' Professional Experience Placements. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18(14), 7675. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18147675

Scope of practice

In regional, rural and remote areas, working to full scope of practice will lead to better consumer outcomes through effective multidisciplinary care models that best use each discipline's skills, experience, and knowledge. Nurses working to their full scope can provide holistic, safe, effective care in many settings. ACN acknowledges the current *Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce Review* (Cormack Review), noting the outcomes should inform new and innovative models of care in the future to address the current and future workforce challenges.

There needs to be recognition of the importance of ensuring that training and education frameworks support health professionals to work to their full scope confidently. This will require a significant investment in training and education, particularly for nurses who currently are not able to access the same benefits as their medical colleagues to support their ongoing training and education needs. This will also support a more seamless and less steep (in terms of learning curve) transition from Registered Nurse to Nurse Practitioner over time if nurses are able to access more opportunities for skills acquisition over time.

Working to the full scope of practice is not possible without investment in strong leadership that is supportive and able to utilise existing regulatory and policy frameworks to make full-scope practice the norm. In regional, rural and remote areas, there needs to be a focus on redesign rather than substitution, and the regulatory frameworks must support the portability of scope between jurisdictions and services. This includes supporting registered nurse prescribing to provide holistic care.

ACN supports The National Rural and Remote Nursing Generalist Framework 2023-2027 which contextualises the comprehensive skill set necessary for nurses to work to their full scope of practice as rural and remote nursing generalists.[15]

3. How will nurses in regional, rural and remote areas provide care in the future?

In general, people living in rural and remote areas of Australia experience poorer health outcomes that those who live in cities.[16][17] ACN's discussion paper – *Improving health outcomes in rural and remote Australia* (2018) suggests that in rural and remote areas, nurses and other health professionals can take on greater leadership roles as '*agents of change*' in developing innovative practice solutions, engaging individuals, families and communities.

ACN members suggested that in cases where communities are very remote and accessing healthcare services is a challenge (time, distance and cost), telehealth services must be available to enable

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[15] The National Rural and Remote Nursing Generalist Framework 2023–2027 | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care
[16] Australian College of Nursing (ACN). 2018, 'Improving health outcomes in rural and remote Australia: Optimising the contribution of nurses: Discussion Paper', ACN Canberra
[17] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022). Rural and remote health.

timely care for people. Telehealth requires community and health services to have adequate resources to ensure that telehealth services can reach communities. Healthcare workers must have the skills and training to ensure person-centred care is provided at all times. [18] As a recent paper describes, using telehealth requires the capacity to adapt to changes in technologies and service provision and a certain amount of resilience to the challenges faced.[19]

A recent review of telehealth[20] recommended that eligibility requirements be extended to nurse practitioner Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and midwifery MBS telehealth items, a view ACN considered retrograde. This recommendation would impose a 12-month barrier to those vulnerable community members who cannot travel for an initial face-to-face appointment to establish a relationship between the patient and the nurse practitioner. Telehealth policies and practices need to remain patient-focused, equitable, and of high quality, especially for those who are most vulnerable in Australia.

Imposing such restrictions on the nurse practitioner and midwifery workforce appears to contravene all these proposed initiatives and ignore the barriers vulnerable people and communities experience in accessing equitable care. This does not help nurses in regional, rural and remote areas provide care to communities. The nurse practitioner model of care in those rural and remote areas that experience the tyranny of distance relies on telehealth to deliver the services this population requires. It is recognised that telehealth cannot always provide the diagnoses that face-to-face consultations can provide; healthcare professionals must recognise when a face-to-face consultation is essential.[21]

ACN members are particularly concerned about the safety of nursing personnel working in rural and remote areas. Nurses providing care in rural and remote areas need sound communication tools to be able to contact other personnel in emergencies, either satellite devices or two-way radios.[22] This will help provide for their safety and wellbeing. The ACN position statement – *Second responder callouts in rural, remote and isolated workplaces* (2023) highlights the importance of always having two people attending to emergency callouts and home visits. It is also noted that nurses working remotely require high level training in conflict resolution and psychological care.

ACN community fully support the Unleashing the Potential of our Workforce - Scope of Practice Review (Cormack review)[23] suggesting that being able to work to full scope of practice will enable a far better service of care to communities in regional, rural and remote Australia than is available currently.

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[18] Australian College of Nursing (ACN) (2019). 'Person-Centred Care', ACN, Canberra.
[19] Ashley, C., Williams, A., Dennis, S., McInnes, S., Zwar, N. A., Morgan, M., & Halcomb, E. (2023). Telehealth's future in Australian primary health care: a qualitative study exploring lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic. *BJGP open*.
[20] Department of Health and Aged Care (2023) MRAC Post Implementation Review of Telehealth Services draft report https://consultations.health.gov.au/medicare-reviews-unit/mrac-draft-report-post-implementation-review-of-te/
[21] Details provided in ACN's response to the Medical Board of Australia's consultation on the draft revised Guidelines: Telehealth consultations with patients
[22] Australian College of Nursing (ACN) (2023). 'Second responder for callouts in rural, remote and isolated workplace settings – Position Statement', ACN, Canberra.
[23] Department of Health and Aged Care (2023) Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce – Scope of practice review

Internationally qualified nurses and midwives working in regional, rural and remote areas

Nurses are crucial for providing health care to people living in remote and rural areas.[24] Internationally Qualified Nurses and Midwives (IQNMs) have played a particularly important role in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia where attracting and retaining skilled nurses can be difficult. By supporting migration pathways for IQNMs to work in rural and remote communities, the Australian community will benefit from greater access to care for those who need it most. Permanent migration pathways will enable IQNMs to integrate within the community and develop their ties to rural and remote Australia.

ACN also recognises the importance of ensuring that nursing migration does not negatively impact the nursing workforce in the countries from which nurses are migrating.[25] ACN supports the International Council of Nurses (ICN) position statement on international career mobility and ethical nurse recruitment.[26] ACN encourages the Australian government and health services to work with relevant international and national organisations and peak bodies to develop sustainable strategies for addressing nursing workforce shortages.

Attracting and retaining IQNMs requires Australia to prioritise ongoing integration pathways to support nurses settling into Australia and the local workforce, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas. Recent research indicates that integration and retention is the primary issue host countries face when recruiting IQNMs to supplement the domestic workforce.[27]

At the Health Workforce Roundtable in September 2022, ACN suggested that skilled migrants be linked with and supported by professional organisations and community groups in the state or territory where they settle. Connecting migrants supports their integration into Australian society and culture, creating a sense of belonging and connecting with people who have a lived skilled migrant experience.

Mechanisms to enhance integration and retention include dedicated mental health and wellbeing pathways tailored to IQNMs; mentoring resources that are nurse-led and designed; avenues for connecting nurses from similar backgrounds; English-language and culture courses. Cultural courses are important not only for the IQNMs to allow them to understand the diversity, complexity, and traditions of the community in which they are located and working, but also for the workplace community to understand the cultural differences that are part of the IQNMs coming to work in their organisations.

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[24] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022). Rural and remote health.
[25] Parliamentary Inquiry into Migration, Pathway to Nation Building, 2023, Submission 90 Submissions – Parliament of Australia (aph.gov.au)
[26] International Council of Nurses (2019) https://www.icn.ch/system/files/documents/2019-11/PS_C_International%20career%20mobility%20and%20ethical%20nurse%20recruitment_En.pdf
[27] Zanjani, Ziaian, Ullrich & Fooladi (2021). Overseas qualified nurses' sociocultural adaptation into the Australian healthcare system: A cross-sectional study

Cultural safety

4. How can we ensure the healthcare environment is culturally sensitive for nurses from diverse backgrounds?

Cultural competencies are essential for addressing health disparities and improving culturally competent care. Health professionals' education can help address racial and ethnic discrimination. ACN members suggest nursing schools should provide more opportunities for cultural competence development, including international standards for culturally competent care.[28] Teaching standards should be adapted to local cultural diversity, promoting cultural sensitivity, adaptability, and motivation. This ensures nurses have a proper cultural context for effective care.[29]

ACN members encouraged increased overseas immigration, with more accessible and permanent visas, and better acceptance of foreign degrees. In line with this, it is essential that accessible conversion programs are available to help overseas qualified nurses get the jobs they were trained for. The Australian immigration system is notoriously difficult to navigate, with multiple visa categories assigned to skilled migration pathways, with extended associated wait times. The cost of securing a permanent visa is significant and comes in addition to the cost of registration which currently includes approved bridging courses or the outcomes assessment pathway. [30]

ACN members spoke of the need to increase diversity in the workforce and build culturally safe environments for everyone. There needs to be the provision of clear avenues to resources and support networks for anyone in crisis or who is being subjected to abuse or racism. Health care organisations need to commit to fully integrating culturally sensitive practices.

ACN members believe that healthcare organisations must require mandatory and regular training in cultural safety. Understanding different cultures and countries and how different cultures provide healthcare is essential for effective healthcare. More opportunities for education and cultural training for all nurses and their teams should be provided. Educational opportunities should focus on cultural diversity and communication skills, which are foundational to efficient and effective nursing care.

A study [31] showed that participants found training undertaken outside their own healthcare organisation beneficial for cross-cultural care. They believed that incorporating diverse perspectives from different fields could enhance understanding of cultural issues. They suggested that hospitals should consider using professionals from different fields for continuing education. This *'educational partnership'* method, where ethnic community members share their experiences, has been proven

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[28] World Health Organization (2021) Refugee and migrant health: Global Competency Standards for health workers

[29] Červený, M., Kratochvílová, I., Hellerová, V., & Tóthová, V. (2022). Methods of increasing cultural competence in nurses working in clinical practice: A scoping review of literature 2011–2021. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 936181.

[30] Nursing and Midwifery Board Ahpra, (2022). Internationally qualified nurses and midwives

[31] Kaihlanen, A. M., Hietapakka, L., & Heponiemi, T. (2019). Increasing cultural awareness: qualitative study of nurses' perceptions about cultural competence training. *BMC nursing*, *18*(1), 1-9.

to increase healthcare professionals' understanding of cultural differences and encourage further discussion.

ACN Members encouraged organisations to not only increase the diversity of nurses they employ, selecting nurses from diverse backgrounds, but also support them in their quest for senior and leadership positions. Leadership needs to exemplify cultural sensitivity and representation. Leadership should encourage nurses from diverse backgrounds to create campaigns to change the image of nursing to that of an inclusive profession embracing diversity and visibility of the cultural mix within the workforce.

Members also suggested that workplaces could consider offering overseas exchange opportunities for nurses and all healthcare professionals, expanding their knowledge and providing experiences that enable better understanding of the diversity within their patients.

First Nations nurses

5. What actions should be taken to build and support the First Nations nursing workforce?

There needs to be accessible and appropriate bridging programs to create suitable pathways into nursing, which may be non-traditional, flexible and adaptive pre-registration education. There also needs to be a greater presence of First Nations peoples educating our nursing students and qualified nurses.

There needs to be a schooling strategy, supporting First Nations people in school to value and trust institutions so that they feel safe to be part of the solution to develop and grow a healthcare and nursing workforce that includes them. Support First Nations students to become nurses from their own communities. Encourage some high school students to undertake training while at school in the form of certificates in aged care. But more importantly, Indigenous students need to be encouraged and supported through the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) track at school to enable them to enter university with an ATAR score. Students can be encouraged to work within their own community first before engaging in the diploma or a degree.

We, in nursing and in education, need to ask First Nations peoples what they need (i.e. include them in the conversation). There is nothing more important than listening to and learning from First Nations people. No one knows more about what First Nations people need than themselves.

Provide scholarships for people to undertake the Diploma or Bachelor of Nursing. Some members suggested that with guaranteed positions in indigenous communities on graduation would be beneficial. Other comments suggested that Indigenous nurses needed to experience the mainstream nursing environment, to become the best nurse they could be, consolidate their skills, then return to their communities to provide exceptional care and to be role models for community.

Pathways to university qualifications must have additional financial support including stipends, childcare and additional travel and accommodation costs. First Nations nurses should be paid to

complete their degree with no Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) debt and enough of a stipend or scholarship to live on. Ensure they are supported with appropriate cultural leave etc. Workplace placement poverty is a major barrier to First Nations people enrolling in nursing courses. High level scholarships and funding to attract First Nations students are paramount as well as opportunities for them to undertake placement in culturally suitable healthcare facilities. First Nations peoples should have access to accessible and affordable nursing education and be supported by dedicated First Nations nursing educators.

All universities need to ensure that lecturers know what ITAS tutoring is and how Indigenous students can access it.[32] ITAS provides dedicated study assistance programs to provide tutoring and support to their Indigenous students but staff and students need to know it is available. Support universities to create regional campuses. Ensure the university has mentoring/tutoring/clinical supervision and any other support to deal with unique challenges faced by First Nations nurses and student nurses. Priority needs to be given to developing transition to practice programs for First Nations nurses, particularly ones that support them to work in their communities.

First Nations nurses are such an important part of our workforce. We need to make sure our courses are culturally suitable, we must make entering a nursing degree attractive, and ensure our university environments are appropriate and supportive, and support our First Nations students to complete their programs of study. Indigenous students leave when they are not well supported by the program manager or the study environment, or if the teaching staff do not understand the student's cultural needs. For those nurses with family challenges, understanding and support to ensure they can continue to come to class and complete their work is essential.

All nursing institutions must keep creating jobs in nursing under 50(d) identified positions to ensure there are jobs for Indigenous nurses after they have graduated. We need to do whatever it takes to keep all First Nations nurses in the workforce as they are a precious asset and should be treated as such.

Indigenous health care workers are present in many remote areas. A national strategy to encourage and support Indigenous health care workers to further their studies may be invaluable. Encouraging Indigenous health care workers to mentor younger school age children to look at healthcare roles for themselves and their communities would encourage young First Nations people to think about a career in nursing.

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[32] Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS)

Career pathways and specialisation

6. How can nursing career pathways be articulated so that the workforce understands how to navigate and build a satisfying and stimulating career in nursing?

The growing demand for skilled nurses necessitates consideration of more transparent career pathways for nurses. Career pathways should outline potential progressions and promote personal and professional growth. Pathways should provide a structured roadmap for nurses to visualise long-term career goals, identify necessary steps for progression, and make informed decisions about their professional development. This helps empower nurses to reach their full potential and adapt to the evolving healthcare landscape. Healthcare organisations should invest in career pathways for nurses, as it directly correlates with staff retention and employee satisfaction. This commitment to growth fosters talent development.[33]

A clear career framework is essential to help nurses navigate and build a rewarding career in the nursing profession. This includes defining entry-level, mid-level, and advanced roles, as well as providing clear information about educational pathways, specialisation opportunities, professional development programs and mentorship programs. ACN encourages nurses to engage in lifelong learning, undertake regular Continuous Practice Development (CPD), and enrol in post graduate training to expand their skills and knowledge and thus further their opportunities.

ACN Members highlighted the need for a clear understanding of the scope and pathways of managerial or clinical leadership roles and the educational opportunities that can lead to these positions.[34] They also suggested that career pathways should be more flexible and provide pathways for choices. To assist nurses with their career decision-making, establishing a national career advisory service for nurses, that highlights the breadth of opportunities and helps navigate pathways would be highly beneficial.

Nurse Practitioners

Providing a clear pathway to becoming a Nurse Practitioners (NP) is highly desirable. A much clearer vision of the role of a NP would provide inspirational vision for new nurses. Previously, privately practicing NPs had to engage in a collaborative arrangement with a general practitioner in order to access MBS item numbers. This requirement is being disbanded allowing much more autonomy of work for the NP. Furthermore, the scope of practice for NPs will be better articulated and will allow NPs to provide a more comprehensive service for community.[35]

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[33] Nashwan, A. J. (2023). The Vital Role of Career Pathways in Nursing: A Key to Growth and Retention. *Cureus*, *15*(5).
[34] ACN College of Nursing, Institute of Leadership
[35] Department of Health (2021) Nurse Practitioner 10 Year Plan Consultation paper

Mentors

Mentors play a significant role in build a satisfying and stimulating career in nursing. ACN recognises and acknowledges[36] that mentors are invaluable for nurses at every stage of their learning and their careers. Mentors should inspire nurses and show nurses the path to new opportunities and career progression. Mentorship programs should connect experienced nurses with those in their early career, presenting transparent and well-communicated career advancement criteria and advice.

Raise the profile of nursing

Recognition of achievements should be celebrated at various stages of nurses' careers. This is valuable for the individual gaining the recognition but important for nurses wanting to know what opportunities exist for themselves. Specialisation opportunities should be highlighted, with information on skills, certifications, and experiences required for each. Professional development programs should offer opportunities for skill enhancement, leadership training, and career advancement.

Nurses' health and wellbeing

7. What are the barriers and enablers that need to be overcome to enhance workplace culture for nurses?

Nursing faces significant challenges due to work-related issues, global shortages, an aging population, and increased care demands, leading to high turnover rates and adverse health outcomes.[37] A study conducted by Thapa et al (2022), found that inconsistency between a nurse's workload and the time allocated to complete work is a critical factor in reducing compassionate care in nurses. The study identified key barriers to a positive workplace culture:

- organisational neglect of nurse needs
- lack of compassionate role models
- focus on routines over patients
- personal and professional attitude of
- lack of holistic approach to providing care

Positive peer relationships and teamwork were credited with enhancing work enjoyment and boosting retention among employees.[38]

According to ACN Members, nursing is a profession that requires change, including the introduction of appropriate nurse-to-patient ratios and addressing issues such as bullying, workload, discrimination, unconscious bias, and hierarchies. Barriers to a positive workplace include individual

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[36] ACN's pre-budget submission 2024-25 document

[37] Thapa, D. R., Subedi, M., Ekström-Bergström, A., Areskoug Josefsson, K., & Krettek, A. (2022). Facilitators for and barriers to nurses' work-related health-a qualitative study. *BMC nursing*, *21*(1), 1-13.

[38] Waltz, L. A., Munoz, L., Weber Johnson, H., & Rodriguez, T. (2020). Exploring job satisfaction and workplace engagement in millennial nurses. *Journal of nursing management*, *28*(3), 673-681.

personalities, different shift schedules, and different values, while enablers include shared experiences and a shared environment. Further enablers identified were allowing for full scope of practice, autonomy, and equality. It was recommended that a nursing think tank be established for nursing philosophers and thinkers to address these challenges. A critical social perspective should empower nurses to notice and challenge negative workplace cultures, build resilience and apply research findings to workplace adversity and resilience.

Occupational violence

Occupational violence has a profoundly negative impact on the workplace. In response to the impact of occupational violence on nurses, ACN established the Nurses and Violence Taskforce in 2021 to develop policy and support advocacy to eradicate occupational violence against nurses. They key recommendations focused on the need for a nationally consistent dataset on occupational violence to enable national reporting mechanisms and the need to advocate for the introduction of mandated psychologically safe processes across all work environments where nurses work. ACN promotes further policy and advocacy initiatives to support nurses and eliminate violence in all its forms.

Stress and burnout

Healthcare workers often suffer from mental health issues like burnout, stress, and depression due to workplace conditions like excessive workloads, violence, and bullying. These issues negatively impact patients and those who remain at work. Factors contributing to these issues include high job demand, low job control, low social support, effort-reward imbalance, low organisational justice, job insecurity, temporary employment status, atypical working hours, bullying, and role stress. Non-work determinants like family status and social support networks also play a role. Mental health issues in healthcare systems increase the risk of patient safety incidents, poorer care quality, reduced patient satisfaction, medical errors, and infections. This poor mental health also leads to workforce shortages and significant economic costs.[39] Nursing leadership plays a crucial role in reducing workplace bullying among nurses, fostering a safe and healthy work environment. Proactive strategies and organisational interventions, involving nursing administrators or experts, are needed to protect nurses experiencing bullying.[40]

Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision is an enabler to enhance workplace culture. As outlined in ACN's position statement – *Clinical Supervision for Nurses and Midwives* (2019), clinical supervision is a formally structured professional arrangement between a supervisor and one or more supervisees, which is positively supported and actively promoted by employers, irrespective of a nurse's role, area of practice and years of experience. It facilitates the development of reflective practice, professional competence and confidence of the supervisees, through increased awareness and understanding of

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[39] Gray, P., Senabe, S., Naicker, N., Kgalamono, S., Yassi, A., & Spiegel, J. M. (2019). Workplace-based organizational interventions promoting mental health and happiness among healthcare workers: A realist review. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *16*(22), 4396.

[40] Kim, Y., Lee, E., & Lee, H. (2019). Association between workplace bullying and burnout, professional quality of life, and turnover intention among clinical nurses. *PLoS one*, *14*(12), e0226506.

the complex human and ethical issues within their workplace.[41] Clinical supervision has been shown to promote a positive practice environment that values learning, feedback, and collaboration.[42] There needs be an investment in a nationally consistent framework that provides all nurses at risk of vicarious trauma with accessible and free clinical supervision

Responding to a changing workforce

To enhance workforce culture, nurse leaders need to understand the perspectives and preferences of each generation, and to create a work environment that fosters intergenerational harmony and teamwork. As outlined in a study conducted by Tan and Chin (2023) [43] Gen Y and Z are more tech-savvy and can adapt quickly to new technology. They expect to have access to the latest equipment and software, and to use them to enhance their work efficiency and quality. Gen Y and Z value work-life balance more than older generations. They seek flexible work arrangements, such as part-time, casual, or remote work, and they prioritize their personal and family needs over work commitments. Gen Y and Z desire more recognition and respect from their colleagues and managers. They feel that they are often overlooked or underestimated because of their age, and they want to be acknowledged for their contributions and achievements. Awareness of the differences and a flexible approach to different needs across generations will help promote a positive work culture.

Building nursing research capacity

8.   What actions/ change needs to occur to build capacity and numbers of nurse researchers across whole of health?

Responsibility of the employer/organisation

Healthcare organisations should encourage nurses to pursue postgraduate study and higher research degrees to gain knowledge and experience for conducting research. This can be achieved through a culture of support and study leave. To support new graduates and early career nurses in pursuing honours or postgraduate degrees, agreements should be developed between healthcare settings and tertiary institutions. Clinical settings should foster a research culture, providing opportunities for clinicians to participate in research teams, mentoring, and supervision. Recognising postgraduate studies as required for positions is crucial, as senior nurses who have not engaged in research may not be the best advocates for those who wish to. Incentives should be in place to support nurses in roles with set research time, ensuring they do not lose pay while working shifts. Nurse researchers should be employed to teach staff how to develop their capabilities, recognising that funding is needed for front-line staff to attend training.

[41] Australian College of Mental Health Nurses, Australian College of Midwives, and Australian College of Nursing (2019). Position statement: Clinical Supervision for Nurses & Midwives

[42] Rothwell C, Kehoe A, Farook SF, *et al* (2021). Enablers and barriers to effective clinical supervision in the workplace: a rapid evidence review *BMJ Open* 2021;**11:**e052929. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2021-052929

[43] Tan, S., Chin, G. Generational effect on nurses' work values, engagement, and satisfaction in an acute hospital. BMC Nurs 22, 88 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-023-01256-2

Encourage more nurse PhD graduates

ACN's Emerging Research Leader Program (ERLP)[44] is designed to help nurses on the path to becoming a researcher and through that, become inspired to enrol in a research degree such as a PhD. ACN is committed to nurturing the next generation of nursing leaders. ACN believes that by fostering research skills, nurses can keep nursing practice and healthcare at the cutting edge, ensuring top-notch person-centered care for all. Encouraging nurses into programs such as these is important providing nurses with the research skills necessary to become a researcher and to enrol in a PhD.

Promotion of research and PhD studies in the workplace is required. Increased investment in nursing research can create opportunities for aspiring researchers. Encouraging nurses to present their research at events and conferences and using post-nominals on signature blocks can help promote themselves and their achievements.

Member experience: I was at conference in Europe recently and was astounded by the number of young nurses with PhDs. It made me wonder why it's so hard in Australia to continue to further study. Is it the cost, or the academic approach? Participating at the conference made me realise the value of having these researchers embedded in the health organisation rather than at university. We need to do better in Australia.

Increase funding and support for research

The National Health Research Council (NHMRC) and the Medical Research Foundation (MRFF) need to increase funding for research for nurses. The current Investigator Grants[45] scheme disadvantages nurse researchers due to the lack of experience required for grant applications. Nurses are not lab-based, making competition difficult. A dedicated research funding stream is needed for the next decade. Supporting hospitals in releasing nurses to conduct and engage with research is also crucial. Current funding models do not support this. More joint appointments with health service providers and universities are required.

Nurse researchers need to focus on implementation-focused research, not just clinical trials. Additional grant funding would encourage more nurses to participate in research through grants and scholarships. Nurses should be acknowledged for their role in research and given the same support as medical professionals. They should also be provided with protected CPD and research time. Nurses take on the workload of all research in many places but are often questioned about their right to attend conferences or workshops.

Develop a clinical-academic pathway for nurses

There needs to be a clinical-academic pathway in this country as seen in the UK. With that would come the valuing of research by senior nurse and medical leaders and Directors of Nursing.

Member experience: When moving from the UK to Australia, I had to decide whether to follow the clinical or academic pathway. I chose academics to enable me to complete my PhD but then found that I was considered clinically de-skilled. Upon discussion with a Director of Nursing, I was told I

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[44] Australian College of Nursing's Emerging Research Leader Program
https://www.acn.edu.au/leadership/emerging-research-leader-program
[45] National Health and Medical Research Council (n.d.) Investigator Grants

would need to justify why I was more employable than a new graduate despite my having a master's and a PhD in addition to specialist training and clinical experience. I was told to remove my academic work, such as my PhD, Masters and research publications, as 'a Nurse Unit Manager would not be interested in all that'.

Researchers in the regions

Regional and remote universities require increased research and workforce development funding to develop innovative solutions for elderly care and build an educated workforce for safety. This includes support workers, enrolled nurses, registered nurses, and postgraduate care coordination positions. Additionally, universities need more postgraduate degrees, such as master's and PhD programs, with available research scholarships.

Recruitment and retention

9. How can we increase the recruitment and retention of nurses to meet the current and future demand?

The McKinsey 2021 Future of Work in Nursing Survey indicates that a significant number of registered nurses in Australia are planning to leave their current roles within the next 12 months, potentially leaving 20,000 to 40,000 nursing positions unfilled.[46]

Retaining nurses at all stages of their careers from university to the workplace is a complex issue, with various influencing factors. As covered in more detail under Question 19, providing financial and mentoring support for student nurses and new nurses is critical to ensure students graduate and begin their nursing career. Paid placement opportunities for student nurses will ensure that trainee nurses can take on placement without struggling for money to pay for food and rent. Providing a stipend to cover the cost of travel to placements would also be welcome (see Question 12).

Supporting new nurse starters, ensuring a supportive environment can also help retain nurses. To increase recruitment and retention, to build the supply of registered nurses, provide free tuition and provide free accommodation and board for new nurses.

Implementing a nationwide, nationally consistent transition to practice program for new graduates would be extremely valuable. A transition to practice program would include mentorship through nurses' early experience and introduce nurses to the wealth of opportunities available to them throughout their careers. As detailed in Question 19, a nationally consistent education and training framework to support skill and knowledge acquisition for the whole of a nurse's work life is essential. Introducing the framework in the transition to practice program would be invaluable.

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[46] Berlin, G., Bruce, D., Lapointe, M., Luthra, K., & Maud, M. (2022, September 23). *Should I stay, or should I go? Australia's nurse retention dilemma*. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare/our-insights/should-i-stay-or-should-i-go-australias-nurse-retention-dilemma#/

A nationally consistent program would benefit from the experiences and feedback of all new nurses nationwide enabling an evaluation program to continuously monitor and improve the program. The aim would be to ensure that new nurses' experience is positive and would lead to better retention in the early years. Nurses would also have a clearer picture of their career pathway with identified milestones and goals along the way.

ACN members suggest the nursing profession faces challenges with staffing, culture, and management, which can lead to burnout and under appreciation. To retain nurses, strategies should be developed to stabilise the current workforce, including increased pay, incentives, and collaboration with universities. Establishing an improved social policy in equity and diversity within hospitals can help improve patient ratios and work culture.

ACN acknowledges that workforce shortages impact retention and contribute to ongoing retention issues. Burnout during the pandemic caused many to leave the profession; the resulting shortages post-COVID continue to influence nurses' decisions to leave. [47] There is a need to break the cycle of nurses leaving the profession. Institutions must acknowledge a role in making a difference, developing policies that will make the workplace a more attractive place to be with improved working environments, better pay and career opportunities.[48]

The World Health Organization suggests improving salaries, establishing pay equity, providing improved working conditions, better access to developmental opportunities, and allowing nurses to work to their full scope of practice.[49] The Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce – Scope of Practice Review[50] is welcomed by ACN. ACN's members believe the whole healthcare workforce will be positively impacted, creating a much-improved environment. The ability to work to full Scope of Practice will lead to more effective and efficient services, improved health outcomes, shorter wait times for consumers and greater job satisfaction for health practitioners, leading to better staff retention.

Retention and engagement strategies in healthcare involve ensuring nurse leaders with value their teams and build trust within their teams.[51] The nursing workforce is knowledgeable and benefits from being appreciated. This in turn leads to less burnout and improved relationships. Teaching leadership skills such as listening and caring can help leaders retain and engage disengaged team members, ultimately boosting overall team performance. To foster a positive work environment, leaders should seek regular feedback from the team and follow up with conversations; stay up to date with strategies, goals, and updates; use encouraging language to express thanks and to show appreciation; recognise and value nurses' contributions in the workplace; be assertive, listen

[47] McGuinness, S. L., Johnson, J., Eades, O., Cameron, P. A., Forbes, A., Fisher, J., ... & Leder, K. (2022). Mental health outcomes in Australian healthcare and aged-care workers during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(9), 4951.

[48] Buchan, J., Catton, H., & Shaffer, F. (2022). Sustain and Retain in 2022 and Beyond. *Int. Counc. Nurses*, *71*, 1-71.

[49] Chamanga, E., Dyson, J., Loke, J., & McKeown, E. (2020). Factors influencing the recruitment and retention of registered nurses in adult community nursing services: an integrative literature review. *Primary health care research & development*, *21*, e31.

[50] Department of Health and Aged Care (2023) Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce – Scope of Practice Review

[51] Yeager, V. A., Wisniewkis, J. M. (2017). Factors that influence the recruitment and retention of nurses in public health agencies. 132(5) 556-562.

actively; look for strengths in others; accept differences and embrace diversity. Leaders should aim to cultivate a culture of curiosity and awareness in the team, focusing on potential opportunities rather than close situations and people. This will help team leaders notice the impact of strategies and enable a culture of appreciation and growth to be fostered.[52]

The future of nursing in Australia

10. What should our ambition and vision for the nursing workforce be in the future?

The national nursing ambition and vision should be to **shape health and advance nursing to enhance the healthcare of all Australians**.[53] This reflects ACN's vision which is committed to ensuring that Australian nurses have access to educational, research, advocacy, and leadership opportunities that will keep them highly skilled and at the cutting edge of healthcare delivery.[54]

As the largest healthcare profession in Australia,[55] nurses have a unique insight into not only the care experience of people in Australia but also the healthcare workforce. ACN continues to advocate for equitable access to health care for all members of the Australian community.

The nursing workforce plays a vital role in providing safe, quality and patient-centred care across various settings and specialties. Nurses are at the forefront of healthcare delivery, innovation, and research. They are also key contributors to health system sustainability and efficiency. Nurses are cost-effective in terms of impact on patient outcomes because they provide high-quality care that can prevent complications, reduce hospitalisations, and improve health behaviours.[56] Investing in nursing improves clinical outcomes without significantly altering the cost.[57] The evidence indicates that increasing the number of registered nurses can lead to improved outcomes and potentially lower net costs.[58]

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[52] Taylor, M. (n.d.). Nursing: 15 ways to boost engagement and retention.
[53] About us – Australian College of Nursing (acn.edu.au)
[54] Home – Australian College of Nursing (acn.edu.au)
[55] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2022). *Health Workforce,* AIHW, Australian Government.
[56] Committee on the Future of Nursing 2020–2030; The Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2021 May 11. 4,
[57] Lasater, K. B., McHugh, M. D., Rosenbaum, P. R., Aiken, L. H., Smith, H. L., Reiter, J. G., Niknam, B. A., Hill, A. S., Hochman, L. L., Jain, S., & Silber, J. H. (2021). Evaluating the Costs and Outcomes of Hospital Nursing Resources: a Matched Cohort Study of Patients with Common Medical Conditions. *Journal of general internal medicine*, *36*(1), 84–91. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-020-06151-z
[58] Griffiths, P., Saville, C., Ball, J., Dall'Ora, C., Meredith, P., Turner, L., & Jones, J. (2023). Costs and cost-effectiveness of improved nurse staffing levels and skill mix in acute hospitals: A systematic review. *International journal of nursing studies*, *147*, 104601. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2023.104601

11. What will the nursing workforce of the future look like? How will it be different? And what impact will that have on workforce planning?

Nurses are innovative and solution focused. They will be at the forefront of reimagining and redesigning collaborative, multidisciplinary models of care that recognise and support the breadth and depth of the nursing scope of practice. As the largest healthcare workforce, nurses have the greatest opportunity for impact through effective redesign, and better alignment of roles and scope within the multidisciplinary team. The nursing profession is primed for significant changes in the future. Some of the predicted changes include:[59]

- More education through online programs
- Telehealth and chatbots becoming the new normal
- Greater reliance on technology
- A focus on population health
- A community-based approach to care
- A focus on demographic shifts amidst a market that is facing a shortage of primary and specialty care doctors
- New career pathways for nurses, including expanded scopes of practice and responsibilities.[60]

In addition, informatics will be the biggest area of growth for the nursing industry. Nursing informatics is an established, distinct specialty within nursing. It is the specialty that integrates nursing science with multiple information and analytical sciences to identify, define, manage and communicate data, information, knowledge and wisdom in nursing practice.[61]

Telehealth services are also expected to become more prevalent in the future. Nurses will be required to field calls from the general public in an even greater capacity via telehealth services, which opens up new opportunities for work flexibility. [62]

While digital technologies have the potential to improve patient care and experience, challenges in nursing's use of digital technology persist. A concern is that nurses have generally not kept pace with rapid changes in digital technologies and their impact on society, limiting the potential benefits they bring to nursing practice and patient care.[63] However, many examples show how digital technologies already bring benefit to nursing practice and education. For instance, telehealth programs where nurses provide daily monitoring and triage of patients with chronic diseases have helped reduce emergency department admissions.[64] Mobile devices, in particular smartphones and health

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[59] Science World Report (2020). The Future of Nursing: What Does It Look Like?
[60] Ibid.
[61] Nurses Now (2023). The Future of Nursing: 11 Trends to Watch
[62] Ibid.
[63] Booth, R. G., Strudwick, G., McBride, S., O'Connor, S., & López, A. L. S. (2021). How the nursing profession should adapt for a digital future. *bmj*, *373*.
[64] Ibid.

applications, are enabling nurses to offer remote advice and supplement aspects of nursing education by providing innovative solutions for content delivery and remote learning opportunities.

The development and application to nursing of systems based on AI are still in their infancy. But preliminary evidence suggests virtual chatbots could play a part in streamlining communication with patients, while acknowledging inherent challenges such as data privacy, ethics, and cost effectiveness. To maximize its impact on patient care, the nursing profession should continue to develop virtual care modalities that utilize internet and mobile technology, drawing on its experiences with telehealth and remote models of care.[65]

These changes need to be addressed in workforce planning. There needs to be a greater emphasis on digital technology and AI training for undergraduate nurses and for all nurses throughout their career. Community based models of care need to be reformulated to meet the changing needs of the aging population and adapt to the everchanging advances in technology.

12. How does the system need to change to support a sustainable future fit nursing workforce?

To sustain a future fit nursing workforce, the health system needs to support nurses throughout their career and provide opportunities for nurses to enhance their profession. ACN recommends a seven point approach:

Support for undergraduate nursing students

Undergraduate nursing students are required to complete a minimum of 800 hours of clinical placement to register successfully as a nurse in Australia.[66] Nationally, clinical placements are unpaid. Amid a cost-of-living crisis, clinical placements are putting an increased financial strain on many students, impacting their overall health. According to a study undertaken in 2022, as many as 65% of students were unable to work while completing clinical placement, with 79% reporting financial hardship and 62% impacting health and wellbeing,[67] also contributing to the high attrition rate. Although clinical placements are defined as vocational placements under the Fair Work Act,[68] this needs to be reviewed with Australia's current and foreseeable nursing shortage. In many European countries, including Switzerland, nursing students are paid a small amount to study and

[65] Scott, J. (2021). The Impact of Technology in Nursing for Day-to-Day Duties | HealthTech Magazine
[66] ANMAC (2020). Updated ANMAC communication to education providers 1 September 2020. ANMAC Communique. 1 September 2020. https://www.anmac.org.au/sites/default/files/documents/professional_experience_placement_during_covid_19_pandemic_-_update.pdf
[67] Usher, K., Fagan, A., Brown, J. A., Mather, C., Marlow, A., Power, T., ... & Lea, J. (2022). The financial challenges for Australian nursing students attending placement-based work-integrated learning. *Collegian*, *29*(2), 154-160.
[68] *Vocational placements*. (n.d.). Vocational placements (fairwork.gov.au)

undertake their placements. This monetary value increases as the student's level of training increases.[69]

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many students studying nursing, allied health, and medicine voiced financial concerns due to losing their regular jobs and income. Changes in clinical placements can put students under unexpected financial strain. Due to these circumstances, some students were ultimately precluded from completing their intended rural or remote placement.[70] The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted nursing education worldwide, causing shutdowns and reduced clinical learning hours, affecting new nurses' transition to professional practice, and affecting their education.[71]

In Victoria, undergraduate nursing or midwifery students can be employed while they study. This employment arrangement is known as a Registered Undergraduate Student of Nursing (RUSON) or a Registered Undergraduate Student of Midwifery (RUSOM). The COVID-19 pandemic has expanded the range of practice for RUSONs and RUSOMs, and these positions are now widely acknowledged in Victorian public health systems.[72] This is an effective approach and should be rolled out nationally.

To support undergraduate nursing students, financial compensation for clinical placements needs to be available and assessable. This initiative will help ease the financial pressure experienced by students on clinical placement and improve graduation numbers.

Transition to Practice Programs

A nurse's first years of experience significantly influence future career decisions. Transition to Practice Programs (TPP) aims to help nurses develop their confidence, competence, and professional identity as nurses, and improve career satisfaction. Many nurses choose to participate in a TPP that provides them with additional support and education during their first year of working, though opportunities are limited.

Currently, a TPP is available in Primary Health Care, funded by the Australian Government and delivered by the Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA). It involves a combination of online learning modules, webinars, workshops, mentoring, and clinical placements. The TPP is open to registered or enrolled nurses who have transitioned to Primary Health Care within the last two years, or who are actively seeking employment in Primary Health Care. This is a good approach and should be rolled out throughout healthcare organisations and mandated as a fourth year of nurse training. [73]

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[69] Hoffman, N., & Schwartz, R. (2015). Gold Standard: The Swiss Vocational Education and Training System. International Comparative Study of Vocational Education Systems. *National Center on Education and the Economy*.

[70] Jessup, B., Hoang, H., Podubinski, T., Obamiro, K., Bourke, L., Hellwege, B., Jatrana, S., Heaney, S., Farthing, A., Sheepway, L., & Rasiah, R. (2022). 'I can't go, I can't afford it': Financial concern amongst health students undertaking rural and remote placements during COVID-19. *Australian Journal of Rural Health*, *30*(2), 238-251. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajr.12855

[71] Powers, K., Pate, K., Montegrico, J., & Pagel, J. (2022). Faculty Perceptions of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on New Graduate Nurses' Transition to Practice: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, *43*, 33-41.

[72] Victoria Government. (2023). Undergraduate student employment programs. https://www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing-and-midwifery/undergraduate-student-employment

[73] Department of Health and Aged Care (2023). Transition to Practice Program.

TPP's also benefits PHC employers by enhancing the quality and safety of patient care, increasing staff morale and productivity, and reducing staff turnover and recruitment costs. Nurses in TPP's require appropriate support, including ongoing exposure to experienced nurses to act as mentors.[74]

National education and training framework

Australian nurses need a nationally consistent education and training framework, for knowledge and skills acquisition, that is flexible to meet the needs of individual nursing career paths. A national education and training framework would help ensure the quality and consistency of nursing education and practice across Australia. It would help prepare nurses to meet the current and future health needs of the population and promote lifelong learning and professional development of nurses.

For regional, rural and remote communities, a national education and training framework would enhance the mobility and recognition of nurses within and across jurisdictions. It would also have the potential to foster collaboration and innovation among nursing educators, regulators, employers, and other stakeholders. Research on postgraduate nurses' learning needs in rural and regional contexts is ongoing. The National Rural and Remote Nursing Generalist Framework in Australia allows rural nurses greater autonomy and collaboration. Proper critical care nursing training is crucial for effective performance.[75]

Postgraduate education significantly enhances the knowledge and skills of nurses and nurse managers, particularly in problem-solving and critical thinking. This enhances their roles, enabling them to provide bedside care, influence healthcare policy, advance in leadership roles, utilise the latest evidence, and achieve senior positions[76].

Government investment in postgraduate programs can enhance specialised skills and retain the workforce in the long term. It is worth noting the disparity that currently exists in access to and funding for education for nurses as opposed to the medical profession. There is a pressing need for a diverse range of nursing scholarship programs to underpin a national framework that supports skills and knowledge acquisition over time.

Invest in Leadership

Nursing leadership plays a vital role in fostering a positive workplace culture, which can improve the quality of care, staff satisfaction, and patient outcomes. Nursing leaders can promote a culture of collaboration, trust, and mutual respect among their staff and other health care professional. They can enable and support staff to work autonomously, make decisions, and take initiative. Effective leaders retain their staff by creating a positive and supportive work environment, where staff feel

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Beasleigh, S., Bish, M., & Mahoney, A. (2023). The learning needs and clinical requirements of post graduate critical care nursing students in rural and regional contexts: A scoping review. *Australian Critical Care*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aucc.2023.06.001

[76] Abu-Qamar, M. E. Z., Vafeas, C., Ewens, B., Ghosh, M., & Sundin, D. (2020). Postgraduate nurse education and the implications for nurse and patient outcomes: A systematic review. *Nurse education today*, *92*, 104489.

valued, appreciated, and motivated. They also address issues that may affect staff retention, such as workload, stress, burnout, or conflict.[77]

It is vital that we recognise and invest in nurse leaders. The ACN Institute of Leadership provides a wide range of leadership development opportunities for nurses at all career stages. It aims to empower nurses to enhance their leadership skills and confidence, advance their careers, and contribute to the improvement of the health system. The ACN Institute of Leadership offers short courses, formal leadership programs for nurses who aspire to or work in management, executive, policy, or research roles.

Although there are leadership programs available, nurses may not access them due to time and financial constraints. Government and health services need to collaborate in offering financial scholarships and supporting nurses to attend leadership events and programs.

Flexible retention strategies

The nursing profession is intergenerational and needs to be flexible and adjustable to meet the demands of the workforce. Flexible retention strategies are ways to keep nurses motivated in their work, and to reduce the high turnover rates. Strategies include offering flexible hours, presenting opportunities for autonomy, providing competitive compensation, offering support (clinical supervision, mentoring), and recognising, celebrating and rewarding nurses.[78]

A flexible retention strategy is required to address the needs of the aging nursing workforce. Phased retirement options for nurses, allowing gradual reduction in work hours while maintaining benefits, could support the adjustment process. A transition to retirement program similar to the one offered to Australian Defence Force Members could be developed, covering topics like identity, mental health, wellbeing, and leaving a legacy. This would support nurses in their final years and encourage them to stay in the workforce longer. To entice newly retired nurses back into the workforce, a review of rulings related to the aged pension and an increase in the limit of secondary income for high-need professions like nursing could help.

At the Commonwealth Government level, there needs to be a review of rulings related to the aged pension is suggested to entice newly retired nurses back into the workforce. An increase in the limit of secondary income for high-need professions such as nursing would help increase and support the nursing workforce.

Enhance the image of nursing

Nursing must celebrate its contribution to Australian society to educate the public on the full scope and capability of nurses and encourage people to explore the possibilities offered by a career in nursing. A national promotion strategy is required to shift the image of nursing, attracting school leavers to university and the nursing profession. The strategy will showcase the range of opportunities nurses have in their careers and the flexibility nurses have to take on new roles, new challenges and experience new workplaces.

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[77] Bourgault, A. M., & Goforth, C. (2021). Embrace teamwork to create and maintain a positive workplace culture. *Critical care nurse*, *41*(3), 8-10.
[78] American Nurses Association (n.d.) Nurse Retention Strategies: How to Combat Nurse Turnover

A national nursing campaign would raise awareness of the positive difference nurses make in people's lives by applying their skills and knowledge across all settings and populations. It will showcase the profession's depth and breadth and educate the public on what it means to be a contemporary nurse in the 21st Century. It will encourage community members to discuss what nurses have done for them.

The recent education campaign to attract teachers to the profession is a good example of this approach. As with the teaching campaign, the federal, state, and territory governments should support the nursing campaign across various media platforms.

Nursing at the centre of service redesign and model of care development

Nurses are essential and valued members of the health care team who can provide valuable insights and contributions to service redesign and innovative models of care. There needs to be a move away from the traditional medical model and rethink the best approach to delivering holistic care.

Nurses have the skills and experience to understand the needs and preferences of patients and communities, and to deliver patient-centred and evidence-based care. Nurses collaborate and communicate effectively with other health professionals and support teams and foster a culture of innovation and learning. By placing nursing at the center of service redesign and model of care development, we can ensure that health services are responsive, accessible, and sustainable.

A workplace that thrives on a positive culture, empowered by accomplished leaders, fully supporting their nurse workforce

13. What are the barriers that need to be overcome to enhance workplace culture and conditions for nurses?

According to a recent BMC Nursing article,[79] some of the barriers that need to be overcome to enhance workplace culture and conditions for nurses include:

- Lack of support from managers: Nurses who do not receive adequate support from their managers are more likely to experience burnout and job dissatisfaction.
- Unfair judgment: Nurses who feel that they are being unfairly judged or criticized are more likely to experience stress and anxiety.

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[79] Thapa, D.R., Subedi, M., Ekström-Bergström, A. *et al.* (2022) Facilitators for and barriers to nurses' work-related health-a qualitative study. *BMC Nurs* **21**, 218 https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-022-01003-z

- Gender inequalities: Gender inequalities can lead to a lack of opportunities for career advancement and lower pay for female nurses.[80]

To enhance workplace culture and conditions for nurses, it is essential to address these barriers and provide nurses with the support and resources they need to deliver quality care. This can include offering opportunities for career advancement and addressing gender inequalities in the workplace.

Strong leadership in nursing is required to promote a positive culture and create a healthy environment that values learning, collaboration, and diversity. Effective leadership improves the quality and safety of patient care by fostering reflective practice, competence, and ethical standards among nurses. It enhances the wellbeing and morale of nurses by providing feedback, recognition, and support.

Delivering person-centred care

14. How do we equip nurses to deliver person-centred care?

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) emphasises person-centred care as a fundamental principle in nursing and health care.[81] It involves treating each person as an individual, protecting their dignity, respecting their rights, and building a therapeutic relationship based on mutual trust. A nurse's ability to deliver person-centred care is influenced by their attributes, their practice, and the care environment.

Attributes that support person-centred care include professional competence, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, commitment to patient care, and strong professional values. Nursing practices that support person-centred care include acknowledging cultural and spiritual beliefs, empowering informed decisions, and providing holistic care. A supportive care environment includes an appropriate staff skill mix, transformational leadership, and a supportive workplace culture.

ACN members strongly support nursing that prioritises person-centred care. The health workforce needs to shift from a medical model to a person-centered one, focusing on communication, education, and training. This includes more community focus groups and nurses participating in policy-making. Management need to be role models and professional training and funding in futurist thinking are needed. Nurses should understand the benefits and drawbacks of AI platforms and understand and adopt safe working practices.

The main barrier to providing effective patient-centered care is competing time pressures. There needs to be sufficient time committed to address all the elements of patient-centred care. The health sector needs to foster teamwork and collaboration, which includes consumers in all decisions that affect them. Nurses are fundamental to this as they spend the most time with patients and their interactions tend to be relational rather than transactional. They are best placed to successfully plan

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[80] Thapa, D.R., Subedi, M., Ekström-Bergström, A. *et al.* (2022) Facilitators for and barriers to nurses' work-related health-a qualitative study. *BMC Nurs* **21**, 218 https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-022-01003-z

[81] Australian College of Nursing (ACN). 2019, 'Person-Centred Care', ACN, Canberra.

care that meets the needs of the person. There is a growing need for skilled leaders and confident nurses who measure nurse sensitive patient outcomes.

15. What changes are required to deliver person-centred care of the future?

ACN members suggested that nurses must incorporate person-centred care principles in all aspects of nursing care, including assessment, treatment, and advocacy. They must manage barriers such as organisational policies and care routines. Healthcare organisations should support person-centred care by educating staff, developing communication skills, providing transformational leadership, and promoting individual accountability. National and state initiatives support person-centred care, such as the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights,[82] National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards,[83] and the Australian Safety and Quality Comprehensive Care Standard.[84] Nurses, health professionals, consumers, and policymakers must collaborate to implement person-centred care models.

ACN members support prioritising person-centred documentation and workflow processes, in partnership with their patients and their carers. Greater input from nurses will help ensure they are better placed to provide person-centred care. Attitude changes should ensure that more nurses are available to deliver required care, focusing on patient acuity and resources. Nurses should understand the benefits and drawbacks of AI platforms in providing patient-centred care and understand and adopt safe working practices.

In the future, patient-centred care will require the careful integration of technology, data and analytics, interdisciplinary collaboration, patient engagement platforms, cultural competence training, community-based care models, remote monitoring, personal health records, advanced communication skills, flexible care delivery models, patient advocacy programs, health literacy initiatives, ethical and legal frameworks, leadership commitment, and continuous learning. [85] This integration of concepts highlights the complexities of delivering patient centred care, now and in the future. Continuous learning and adaptation are crucial for a patient-centric and responsive healthcare environment.[86]

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[82] Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (2020) Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights (second edition)

[83] Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (2021) The National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards

[84] Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (n.d.) Comprehensive Care Standard

[85] Stoumpos, A. I., Kitsios, F., & Talias, M. A. (2023). Digital Transformation in Healthcare: Technology Acceptance and Its Applications. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *20*(4), 3407.

[86] Molina-Mula, J., & Gallo-Estrada, J. (2020). Impact of nurse-patient relationship on quality of care and patient autonomy in decision-making. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *17*(3), 835.

Nurses working to their optimum scope of practice

16. Assuming a wider scope of practice for nurses in the future, what are the emerging roles nurses will need to fill?

Emerging roles will relate to context of practice. For example, skills may be needed in the use of technology or managing multimorbidity. Nurses working in regional, rural and remote area may need skills in prescribing, vaccination, public health skills and disaster management. Nurses who work in conjunction with ambulance services to assist more people staying at home will require an expansion of scope to enable them to conduct assessments, diagnosis and management of conditions. Rather than following a traditional medical model, nurses will increasingly be required to use their extensive critical analysis skills to manage the emerging needs of patients.

Nurses are primed to redesign their role within the scope of their knowledge, education and competence to meet the needs of the community and setting in which they work. This is particularly pertinent for regional, rural and remote nursing, where registered nurses could prescribe and have more scope to cover the health care of communities. Nurse led clinics will become more common and offer more services such as child health and development screening and interventions; disability care and support; public health roles in the community in a preventative health role; disease management.

A national education and training framework is essential in this context, with the need to be flexible enough to meet all individual nursing needs, in all settings and across all services.

ACN Members highlighted the need to increase post-natal care or consider increasing length of stay post-partum again to provide more support to new mothers for breast feeding; this is a role nurses should play. People in our society who can least afford baby formula seem to be the highest users due the lack of support for new mums establishing breast feeding routines. The increased services for new mothers and babies are available for those living in the ACT and Queanbeyan with families being able to access a Maternal and Child Health nurse/midwife up until the child is 5 years old.[87] This is a service that would benefit many in other parts of Australia.

17. What are the most important skills and capabilities that will be required of nurses in the future?

Many of the skills and capabilities required into the future are important traits that nurses need today: intelligence, empathy, critical thinking, an inquiring mind, the ability to care for people, compassion. There will be an increasing need for highly developed assessment, communication, problem solving and leadership skills. To manage self, there is a continued need for resilience and maintenance of a work-life balance. There is also a strong need for nurses to self-reflect on work,

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[87] Canberra Health Services. Care available after you leave. ACT Government

personal behaviours and interactions; self-reflection and resilience go hand in hand and are vital to prevent burn out and to enable individuals willing and able to make changes as needed.

Leadership

Leadership skills are becoming increasingly important for nurses at all levels. Strong leadership within the nursing workforce is vital to ensure a high-quality, sustainable, and effective healthcare system. This is achieved by enhancing the skills and capabilities of senior nurse team leaders, including Nursing Unit Managers (NUMs). Surprisingly, only 33% of NUMs have completed studies beyond an undergraduate degree.[88] Evidence demonstrates that appropriately qualified and supported NUMs can significantly improve the quality of care, efficiency, and workplace coordination. Providing NUMs with upskilling and leadership opportunities can boost staff morale and retention while creating a pathway for early-career nurses looking to advance their careers.[89]

Programs offered by ACN Institute of Leadership,[90] aim to enhance the capacity and capability of registered nurses and midwives. For example, The NUM Leadership Program aims to develop and augment the skillset of participants to influence and manage themselves, others, resources, and operations, benefiting staff, the community, and recipients of care. It offers a direct return on investment for the facilities, staff, and overall health system.

ACN offers many leadership and management courses that will support all nurses entering management or who want to improve their leadership skills. Nurse managers must understand and identify the internal and external pressures that healthcare is facing and have the right skills and knowledge to be able to facilitate change in the 21st century to improve patient outcomes. An accomplished leader and manager will need to be equipped to deal with financial, quality and human resource management built on the foundations of a sound knowledge of the healthcare system and organisational structure and culture.[91] Nurse leaders must be increasingly agile and adaptable all levels of the profession. They must have well developed influencing skills, important for successful advocacy as well as the ability to lead and respond to a constantly changing environment.

Advocacy

Nurses need to have a voice to speak out for themselves, their team, and to advocate for the nursing profession. Nurses also need to advocate for the community they serve and in particular for the vulnerable they care for, identifying concerns and issues and speaking out against unjust or inequitable behaviours. The harms identified in the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability[92] and the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and

[88] Labour Market Insights 2022, https://labourmarketinsights.gov.au/occupation-profile/nurse-managers?occupationCode=2543

[89] Rahmah, N. M., Hariyati, T. S., & Sahar, J. (2021). Nurses' efforts to maintain competence: a qualitative study. *Journal of public health research*, *11*(2), 2736. https://doi.org/10.4081/jphr.2021.2736

[90] Australian College of Nursing, Nurse Director Leadership Program

[91] Australian College of Nursing, Institute of Leadership

[92] Sackville, R., Bennett, B., Galbally, R., Mason, A., McEwin, A., Ryan, J. (2023) Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Final Report: Executive Summary, Our vision for an inclusive Australia and Recommendations. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia

Safety[93] were alarming. The reports on domestic and family violence[94] [95] and modern slavery[96] [97] speak of people, predominantly women and young people being subjected to terrible suffering. Nurses with their frontline access to many vulnerable people must have the skills and capabilities to advocate for those being subjected to harm, the skills to intervene and to provide help and support when and where needed, and the knowledge of the support services available to help those who need confidential legal, medical, housing, financial, and psychological support services and care.

Technology

As the workplace becomes more technologically driven, being able to assess the value of technology, judge the ethics of using technological tools, the ability to translate date will become more important. Understanding AI and its impact on healthcare will be essential. This will include the use, ethics and risks of nanotechnology.

Disaster management

As we head towards a more uncertain future driven by climate change, disaster management skills will be increasingly important for all nurses. Importantly, nurses need strong generalist skills to work in all environments allowing nurses to transfer to different settings. To support all nurses in their workplaces at all stages of their careers, mentoring skills are essential.

Technology drives a very different workforce and health service

18. What are the main ways technology will change the role of a nurse in the future?

Technology will change how healthcare professionals connect with and monitor patients; AI will help diagnosis, medication, monitoring, recording and communicating the healthcare status of patients.[98] With increasingly efficient application of AI across a range of sectors, AI will become intrinsically embedded in the Australian healthcare system.[99] For the nursing profession this includes but is not limited to clinical practice, management, administration, digital informatics, education, and research. The use of AI in health is becoming a fundamental component of the overall care

[93] Pagone, G., & Briggs, L. (2021). Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety Final Report: Care, Dignity and Respect. Canberra, Australia: Commonwealth of Australia

[94] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) Family, domestic and sexual violence data in Australia

[95] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) Personal Safety, Australia

[96] Attorney General's Department (n.d.) Modern slavery

[97] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) Family, domestic and sexual violence: Modern slavery

[98] Poalelungi, D. G., C. L. Musat, A. Fulga, M. Neagu, A. I. Neagu, A. I. Piraianu and I. Fulga (2023). Advancing Patient Care: How Artificial Intelligence Is Transforming Healthcare. *Journal of Personalized Medicine, 13*(8):1214. doi:10.3390/jpm13081214

[99] Reddy, S., Fox, J., & Purohit, M.P. (2019). Artificial intelligence-enabled healthcare delivery. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. *112*(1):22-28. doi:10.1177/0141076818815510.

system. Technology will change the way documentation is recorded; observations taken. In effect it will reduce laborious administrative tasks, create time savings and will improve accuracy of record-keeping.[100]

As AI learns from inputted data it has the capacity to continuously improve its performance over time via repetition, which can result in increasingly independent action[101]. Thus, in order for nursing to benefit from technological advances, nurses need to know and become confident in managing data and data trends to respond to patient needs.

Nurses will need to be flexible around technology's use and be guided to use it to improve patient outcomes. Technology will enable more patients to be seen in quicker time frames, with more accurate diagnoses, allowing nurses to assess patients more quickly and contact them for follow-up easily.

If used well, technology will enable more patient interaction and improve care planning and holistic interventions. Technology should increase the virtual care for people in isolated situations allowing nurses and patients access to mobile technologies and thus remote patient monitoring. Community nurses will be able to view patients' records and speak to patients prior to going out on the road to visit. This will provide essential background information allowing the nurse to prepare for the visit. Telehealth is already playing an important role in caring for community for whom transport is difficult or whose locations are remote. This can only improve equitable care for all communities.

AI will have a significant impact on how we work.[102] However, nurses with an understanding of health informatics are needed to advocate for the nursing profession. Nurses need to be involved in the development of AI technologies to support nursing practice. All those nurses using technologies and AI must be educated on the ethical and clinical considerations when using AI with patients. This will be essential.

Incorporating AI into nursing practices, education and research requires careful planning, training, and ethical considerations. By embracing AI technologies with a focus on enhancing patient care, improving nursing workflows, and maintaining the highest standards of data privacy and ethics, the nursing profession can unlock the full potential of AI to deliver more efficient and intrinsically person-centred healthcare services.

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[100] Pailaha, A.D. (2023). The impact and issues of artificial intelligence in nursing science and healthcare settings. *SAGE Open Nursing, 9*:1-4. doi:10.1177/23779608231196847

[101] Robert N. (2019). How artificial intelligence is changing nursing. *Nursing Management*, *50*(9):30-39. doi:10.1097/01.NUMA.0000578988.56622.21

[102] Reddy, S., Fox, J., and Purohit, M.P. (2019). Artificial intelligence-enabled healthcare delivery. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. *112*(1):22-28. doi:10.1177/0141076818815510.

Education and lifelong learning that provides high quality skills

19. What changes to educational opportunities and career pathways would support the future workforce?

Retaining graduate nurses is crucial for a sustainable workforce, as they face a steep learning curve in healthcare. Early support can enhance clinical competence and confidence, reducing turnover and ensuring a stable workforce.[103]

Clinical placements

Subsidising students during their work placements would be extremely helpful; a stipend to allow them to have money to pay for food, transport, accommodation, and clothing. Undergraduate nurses need more accessible placement locations and more of them.

A new undergraduate degree program

Some ACN members believe a four-year nursing degree program should be implemented with the fourth year being an intern year in a mainstream healthcare service similar to medicine and pharmacy. This would provide better preparation for nurses in their first year out in the workplace. The degree program must include more relevant subjects to modern nursing and include more practical training, so nurses are better prepared upon graduation.

There needs to be greater visibility of opportunities for early-career nurses to ensure they stay engaged and do not leave the profession early. There needs to be a transparent framework or pathway to allow new nurses to decide where they want to head and how to get there. Clear pathways must be consistently worded and named across states, territories and between providers. This will allow more transparency across the country and a consistent naming that is recognisable between jurisdictions.

Lifelong learning

A nationally consistent education and training framework to support skill and knowledge acquisition for the whole of a nurse's work life is essential. An education and training framework must be sufficiently flexible to meet the diverse needs of all nursing career pathways. The framework must also include signposts to provide guidance for any nurse who has a particular career in mind to ensure they can plan their learning pathway and achieve their nursing ambitions.

Nurses require affordable and accessible postgraduate education, including full degrees and short courses/micro-credentials. Accessible education is crucial for upskilling, lifelong learning and career planning. To help nurses complete their planned education, there must be a broader range of accessible scholarships and commonwealth-supported places. Online specialist courses should be

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[103] *Preparing the next generation of practice-ready nurses*. Supporting nursing students eases the transition into care roles | Wolters Kluwer. (2023, September 28).

made more accessible, and flexibility in due dates and assignment timings can help nurses complete their studies. Organisational and employer expectations should be strengthened, and nurses should be paid for continuing professional development (CPD). Recognition of postgraduate qualifications should be improved, and population-based preparation should focus on primary care, rural and remote care, and mental health. Consistent support for PhD students is needed to increase the number of nursing PhD candidates and PhD graduates. Addressing the fall in nurses engaged in postgraduate studies is crucial. More education and training programs should be developed and offered, aligning with growing health needs and emerging trends.

Healthcare professionals must regularly update their skills through continuing professional development (CPD). However, there is limited knowledge about nurses' experiences and perceptions of CPD. A meta-synthesis of qualitative literature on nurses' experiences of CPD could help plan future interventions more effectively and take advantage of examples from different contexts. This will help nurses maintain their skills in the healthcare setting. The meta-synthesis suggests that enhancing access to continuing professional development could be more achievable, realistic, and relevant. It suggests organisations should fund and make it accessible, while nurses should actively engage in it to maintain high standards of nursing care.[104]

Career pathways that are globally aligned, nationally recognised and provide structured progress

20. How can we improve nurse career progression to ensure nurses are retained over their lifetime?

ACN members suggest there is a need to develop a method of valuing and recording a nurse's achievements in a manner that is easily shared and completely portable. An example might be a career passport or career profile, a digital CV that is available online that can be readily shared with employers and universities, and other training providers. This will enable nurses to better envision their own pathway and to plan their career pathway throughout their work trajectory. To enable nurses to travel to different states in Australia, there must be a plan to abolish different states' requirements for registration and practice - one set of qualifications or skill set should be standard across the country.

Nurses need access to a mechanism to share their stories, their career pathways, the opportunities they have been presented with in order to inspire others and to allow nurses to become inspired themselves. Nursing is an extraordinary profession, one that we, as nurses, need to promote more publicly.

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[104] Mlambo, M., Silén, C., & McGrath, C. (2021). Lifelong learning and nurses' continuing professional development, a metasynthesis of the literature. *BMC nursing*, *20*, 1-13.

For nurses, attending, completing, and participating in ongoing upskilling and education activities is critical for nurses to stay current and remain interested in the profession. However, upskilling opportunities are only sometimes supported by the employer through access to leave and/or funding. Nurses are often required to access their annual leave to attend courses or keep up to date professionally: the profession does not consistently support the essential CPD requirements that keep nurses current and informed. Nurses must have ready access to appropriate training and education to retain their currency and competence of existing skills and acquire new skills over time.

Ongoing education and training informed by a national framework serves to build career pathways for nurses that are aligned globally and nationally recognised, supporting structured progress throughout a nurse's work span. Enabling nurses to keep up to date, build and refresh learning, and develop further skills will help maintain an engaged workforce.

Nurses at all stages of their careers benefit from mentoring. Mentorship can help nurses develop workforce capacity to lead and contribute to local, national, and worldwide policy agendas. Mentorship programs can help nurses find their voice, increase their confidence and capacity to lead and build future strategic leaders.[105] Health services must encourage mid-career nurses to engage in mentoring, pursue additional education in their specialty area or explore new specialties to enhance their knowledge and career prospects.

Finally, ACN members recommended that the profession should establish confident, competent, happy and satisfied nurses who are respected within their profession thus making them want to stay within the nursing profession.

Nursing leadership and management

21. How can you ensure effective leadership in the nursing community?

Effective nursing leadership is a combination of skills that involves critical thinking, communication, collaboration and integrity. Effective nurse leaders create a service-oriented culture that is positive and welcoming for patients and their families, and provide learning opportunities for their team. They also recognize and learn from potential leaders in other areas and seek career development support from organisations.

Every health service has a responsibility to invest in nursing leadership. Some of the benefits of effective nursing leadership are:

- Improvements in the quality and safety of patient care by fostering a culture of excellence, innovation, and collaboration among nurses and other health care professionals.

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[105] Rosser, E. A., Edwards, S., Cho Kwan, R. Y., Ito, M., Potter, D. R., Hodges, K. T., & Buckner, E. (2023). The Global Leadership Mentoring Community: An evaluation of its impact on nursing leadership. *International Nursing Review*, *70*(3), 279-285. https://doi.org/10.1111/inr.12860

- Enhancing the satisfaction and retention of nurses by providing them with opportunities for professional development, recognition, and empowerment.
- Contributing to the advancement of nursing knowledge and practice by supporting research, education, and evidence-based practice.
- Influencing health care policy and legislation by advocating for the needs and interests of nurses and patients.
- Responding to the challenges and opportunities of the changing health care environment by adapting to new technologies, models of care, and population needs.[106][107][108]

Strong leadership abilities are necessary for nurses at all levels to improve the standard of care and patient safety. In contrast, policy makers, other healthcare professionals, and the general public may find it simpler to stereotype nurses as *'functional doers'*—those who follow orders—as opposed to *'thoughtful strategists'* who make well-informed decisions and whose independent actions are supported by training, research, and experience.[109]

Nurse leaders must adapt to changing healthcare challenges, and the Australian College of Nursing has developed a Nurse Executive Capability Framework to guide their development. This national standard sets the standard for nurse executives, ensuring they can effectively address social, political, and economic challenges.[110]

The Australian College of Nursing Institute of Leadership supports nurses at all career stages to extend their leadership skills and confidence. In 2023, the Australian College of Nursing launched the Nursing Unit Manager Leadership Program. Clinical nurses transitioning to nursing unit managers face challenges in hybrid management, balancing professional and managerial responsibilities. The Nursing Unit Manager Leadership Program aims to enhance nursing management capabilities, focusing on their ability to lead and manage units in both current and emerging environments, benefiting staff, community, and care recipients.

Other leadership courses offered by the Australian College of Nursing include:

- **The Emerging Nurse Leader Program** supports current and future nurse leaders, from undergraduate nursing students to enrolled and registered nurses in their sixth year of nursing practice, to kickstart their leadership careers by providing access to mentoring, career coaching, professional development webinars and leadership workshops.
- **The Nurse Director Leadership Program** develops nurses who have more than six years of professional experience and have worked in leadership roles within the health or aged care system.
- **The Nurse Executive Leadership Program** will develop those in, or those aspiring to, nurse executive roles to meet the capabilities of ACN's Nurse Executive Capability Framework.

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[106] Leadership in Nursing: Qualities & Why It Matters | ANA (nursingworld.org)

[107] McKenna, J & Jeske D, (2021) Ethical leadership and decision authority effects on nurses' engagement, exhaustion, and turnover intention," Journal of Advanced Nursing, vol. 77, no. 1, pp. 198–206

[108] Dempsey, C & Assi, J (2018) The impact of nurse engagement on quality, safety, and the experience of care: what nurse leaders should know," Nursing Administration Quarterly, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 278–283

[109] Fitzpatrick, J. J. (2010). The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, *31*(6), 347-348.

[110] Nurse-Executive-Capability-Framework.pdf (acn.edu.au)