

MEDIA RELEASE

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ACN urges NSW Government to provide greater support for nurses to solve health workforce shortages

ACN Response to the NSW Government Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) has urged the NSW Government to provide greater funding and support to bolster the nursing workforce to meet increasing health needs across the State.

In its submission to the NSW Government Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding, ACN highlights how nurses and nursing deliver high-quality, timely, and accessible patient-centred care.

ACN CEO, Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN, said proper funding and support for nurses would provide strategic and affordable solutions to health workforce issues affecting NSW, especially in rural, regional, and remote communities.

"The nursing workforce is the largest group of registered health professionals in Australia, with approximately 440,110 nurses registered in 2023," Adjunct Professor Ward said.

"In NSW, there are 114,269 nurses currently registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Board, which is 26 per cent of all registered nurses in Australia.

"The nursing workforce plays a vital role in providing safe, quality, and accessible health care across various settings and specialties, no matter where people live.

"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 while improving patient outcomes because they provide high-quality care that can prevent complications, reduce hospitalisations, and promote healthy lifestyles.

"Investing in nursing improves clinical outcomes without significantly altering the cost.

"The evidence indicates that increasing the number of registered nurses can lead to improved outcomes and potentially lower net costs.

"ACN recognises the challenges and opportunities that the Inquiry presents for the nursing profession and is committed to providing evidence-based and expert advice to inform the Inquiry's recommendations.

In its Submission, ACN made the following recommendations to the NSW Government:

- Provide financial support for nursing students while on clinical placement.
- Fund specialised transition-to-practice programs in areas such as Primary Health, Aged Care and Mental Health.
- Provide a range of scholarships for post-graduate studies in nursing.
- Develop and implement a State-wide mentoring program for nurses.
- Develop an education and training framework for nurses and midwives that supports and funds their annual requirement of continuous practice development.
- Support Local Health Districts to establish a pathway and support nurses to advance their leadership skills throughout their career.
- Fund the development and implementation of a Transition to Retirement Program for nurses.
- Review the rulings related to the aged pension and increase the limit of secondary income for high-need professions such as nursing.
- Explore block funding opportunities to support the stability of health care services.

The ACN Response to the NSW Government Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding is at <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/acn-submission-special-commission-of-inquiry-into-healthcare-funding.pdf>

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Notes to Editors:

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) is the national professional organisation for all nurses and its aim is to ensure that the Australian community receives quality nursing care now and in the future. ACN is a membership organisation with members in all states and territories, health care settings and nursing specialties. ACN is also the Australian member of the International Council of Nurses headquartered in Geneva in collaboration with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF). An organisation not afraid to challenge industry issues affecting the nursing profession or Australia's health care, ACN is a well-connected and educated national body that drives change with people of influence to enhance the delivery of health services to the Australian community. ACN's membership includes nurses in roles of influence, including senior nurses, organisational leaders, academics, and researchers.

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