

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Street Health Faculty to focus on the health of homeless people

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) has established a new Street Health Faculty to address the specific healthcare needs of people experiencing homelessness and social exclusion.

The ACN Street Health Faculty will be chaired by Sonia Martin MACN, a dedicated Registered Nurse with 30 years of experience, the 2021 winner of the Health Minister's Award for Nursing Trailblazers, and the founder of One Bridge, providing health and support services in social and public housing spaces.

ACN CEO, Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN, said today that the new Faculty will focus on helping some of the most vulnerable populations in Australia.

"The Faculty will be a dynamic nurse-led network committed to serving the specific health needs of people who are marginalised and disadvantaged, many of whom have no choice but to try to survive living on the streets," Adjunct Professor Ward said.

"They cannot get to the health services they need, so the health services must go to them – and nurses are actively working in this space.

"We are fortunate to have Sonia Martin on board to lead this Faculty. She knows the sector. She knows the streets. She knows the solutions."

Sonia Martin said the Faculty aligns with the global inclusion health agenda, and it will work to rectify health and social inequities among the most disadvantaged populations.

"We want to fully understand the landscape of nursing in this sector in Australia, identify current needs, and uncover barriers these groups face," Ms Martin said.

"This will inform our priorities and guide our next steps in education, advocacy, and policy development."

Adjunct Professor Ward said the creation of this Faculty addresses a significant gap in our healthcare system.

"It is a strategic move to foster inclusivity, equity, innovation, and leadership in nursing and health care.

"ACN will be actively promoting the new Faculty across the profession to attract nurses who want to contribute to this exciting and worthwhile initiative," Adjunct Professor Ward said.

About Sonia Martin

Sonia Martin, a dedicated Registered Nurse with 30 years of experience, is a trailblazer in healthcare innovation and access for vulnerable populations. In 2018, driven by a passion to combat homelessness, she founded Sunny Street, a nationally acclaimed street health service, providing healthcare directly to those in need. Sonia's commitment to increasing health equity led her to establish her own company, OneBridge, extending her impact to social housing and diverse healthcare settings across Australia.

Recipient of The Dr Dorothea Sandars and Irene Lee Churchill Fellowship in 2022, Sonia conducted research globally in 2023, informing her ongoing advocacy for policy change in Australia and championing equitable healthcare access.

Recognised for her outstanding leadership, Sonia received the 2022 National Outstanding Leadership Award in Entrepreneurship, the 2021 Health Minister's Nursing Trailblazer Award, and nominations for Australian of the Year in 2022 and 2020.

As a courageous leader inspiring women and nurses, Sonia continues to shape the Australian healthcare landscape with compassion, emphasising collaboration, innovation, and global learning in the pursuit of better health outcomes for vulnerable populations.

For more information:

Kirsty Waterford 0403 295 934

Email: acn.media@acn.edu.au

Notes to Editors:

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

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