

MEDIA RELEASE

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Nurse-led care was vital in Australia's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The national response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the value of nurses and nurse-led models of care in protecting the health of all Australians.

In its submission to the Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry, the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) said the response highlighted the need for governments to invest in and empower nurses to lead future health care in Australia.

ACN CEO, Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN, said the Australian nursing profession needs to be formally recognised and acknowledged for nursing's vital contribution in managing Australia's acute and complex health care needs throughout the pandemic.

"Nurse-led clinics played a significant role in providing health care during the COVID-19 pandemic," Adjunct Professor Ward said.

"Prime examples were the mass vaccination centres at AIS Arena in Canberra and Sydney Olympic Park.

"These large-scale sites delivered COVID-19 vaccines to a high number of people in a short time.

"Nurse-led respiratory clinics provided assessment and testing for people with fever, cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath.

"The vaccination centres reduced pressure on hospitals and general practices and prevented the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services, including nurse-led clinics, provided culturally appropriate and holistic care to Indigenous Australians. They ensured access and equity to chronic disease management, maternal and child health, mental health, and social and emotional wellbeing.

"Despite the stresses and hardships presented by the pandemic, nurses showed remarkable courage, compassion, and innovation to care for the community.

"They adapted to new ways of working with telehealth, digital health, and mobile clinics to reach and serve more people in need.

"Nurses also led advocacy for better policies and practices to protect themselves and their patients. This included infection prevention and control, personal protective equipment (PPE), and vaccination.

"ACN provided an immunisation education program for nurses and midwives during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as delivering the vaccination education to other healthcare practitioners.

"The lessons from the pandemic response – especially the key role of nurses across all settings – must inform the Government's current reviews of primary care and scope of practice to ensure all Australians, no matter where they live, have access to a quality health workforce.

"Nurse-led care must be supported and expanded to meet community health needs, especially in rural, regional, and remote areas.

"The pandemic highlighted the need for ongoing support for nurses, which must include the provision of accessible and free clinical supervision for all nurses," Adjunct Professor Ward said.

ACN made several recommendations to the Inquiry, including:

- Prioritise preparedness, connection, and collaboration between Commonwealth and State Governments in response to unexpected health events/pandemics.
- Investigate nurse-led models of care and consider rolling out nationally.
- Invest in a National Clinical Supervision Framework that provides all nurses with accessible and free clinical supervision.
- Review current clinical placement models to sustain the existing workforce and meet the evolving demands of the future workforce.
- Ensure proportionate nursing representation on key advisory boards and expert committees charged with responding to unexpected health events/pandemics and the resultant effect on workforce sustainability, care models, service delivery, and treatment modalities for the future.

The ACN submission to the Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry is at <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/acn-submission-commonwealth-government-covid-19-response-inquiry.pdf>

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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CEO - Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN - Bio



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

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

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