

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Nurses stand ready to complement scarce and overworked doctors**

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) says nurses and allied health professionals stand ready to provide affordable and accessible high-quality primary health care in Australian communities to complement a diminishing number of GPs who are increasingly stressed and overworked.

Responding to Issues Paper 1 from the *Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce Scope of Practice Review* (the Cormack Review), ACN CEO Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN said that highly trained and qualified Nurse Practitioners and Registered Nurses are unleashed and ready to help meet the primary health care needs of all Australians.

“The Issues Paper correctly suggests that health professionals working to their full scope of practice will improve multidisciplinary practice and provide greater workforce satisfaction and retention,” Adjunct Professor Ward said.

“The flow-on effect from this will be improved access to care and improved patient outcomes.

“The shared goal of all health professionals is to provide patients with the right care in the right place at the right time.

“Responsible scope of practice reform will achieve this by unleashing the full potential and capability of all health professionals.

“Report after report and survey after survey from doctors’ groups show that GPs – their members – are dropping in numbers, are stressed and overworked, and fewer are choosing to work in needy rural, regional, and remote communities.

“Patients are missing out. Reform is needed to ensure there is equitable access to quality affordable primary care for everybody when they need it.

“Nurses and allied health professionals must be allowed greater scope to independently provide care to complement the shrinking GP workforce.

“This will require significant change to funding models.

“ACN looks forward to actively contributing to the next rounds of consultations with the Cormack Review ahead of the next Issues Paper, due for release in April 2024.

“Nurses are the solution,” Adjunct Professor Ward said.

ACN also notes other significant observations from Issues Paper 1, including:

- inconsistencies in the regulatory approaches across primary health care professions and the need for greater harmonisation of legislation and a more risk-based approach to regulation;
- the inherent challenges in progressing scope of practice reform over a dispersed primary health care sector. There is a need targeting leadership to promote and embed system-level reform;
- unclear and inconsistent education requirements, particularly relating to post-professional entry skills, specialties, and endorsements. There are opportunities for common interprofessional competencies to be developed;
- opportunities to better enable connected and multidisciplinary care across professions, through alternatives to the existing fee-for-service model (for example, block or bundled funding); and
- significant barriers relating to health information sharing and digital infrastructure, which, if resolved, could significantly support continuity of care and multidisciplinary care teams.

The *Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce Scope of Practice Review Issues Paper 1* is at <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/unleashing-the-potential-of-our-health-workforce-scope-of-practice-review-issues-paper-1?language=en>

ACN’s first submission to the Cormack Review is at <https://www.acn.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/acn-submission-unleashing-the-potential-of-our-health-workforce-review.pdf>

#### For more information:

Kirsty Waterford 0403 295 934

Email: [acn.media@acn.edu.au](mailto: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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