

Australian College of Nursing

Position Statement

Nursing Services Led and Managed by Nurses

Key Statement

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) recognises the nursing profession's long history in leading and managing nursing services. Opportunities exist in the contemporary health care environment for nurses to lead and manage health care services in response to population health needs and health care reforms.

Services developed and managed by nurses may improve timely access to care, provide a person centred approach to care and contribute to healthcare efficiencies and cost savings. Like all health services, services led and managed by nurses require appropriate governance structures to be in place, including:

- organisational support and resources;
- collaborative relationships with other health professionals;
- opportunities for staff clinical supervision and/or mentoring; and
- processes for evaluating the service.

Background and Rationale

Nurse led services have proliferated over the last two decades in response to global pressures such as the ageing population, increases in the incidence and prevalence of chronic diseases, health workforce shortages, economic pressures, and a shift in focus on care delivery in the primary health settings.ⁱ More nurses have developed the financial, management and leadership skills required to direct these services and to ensure service sustainability.

Research findings have found nursing services led and managed by nurses to provide innovative and cost effective models of care which can:

- create greater efficiencies across health service delivery;ⁱⁱ
- address gaps in health service delivery;ⁱⁱⁱ
- increase patient satisfaction;^{iv}
- provide timely access to services;
- lead to shorter hospital stays;

- improve staff satisfaction;^v and
- facilitate continuity of care, which is associated with improved health outcomes.^{vi}

In Australia there are many examples of the range of settings in which services are currently led and managed by nurses, including in acute tertiary hospitals,^{vii} in the community,^{viii ix x} and specialist services in residential and extended care settings.^{xi xii xiii} Changes to funding models have also provided incentives for the employment of nurses in general practice settings,^{xiv} resulting in the establishment of nurse clinics to meet the needs of local populations.^{xv} Structural safe guards and planning initiatives have been identified as important to maximising the effectiveness and safety of these services^{xvi}. Such planning considerations include establishing that:

- the nurse led service is aligned with the strategic direction of the organisation and is supported by key stakeholders;
- the service is funded adequately;^{xvii}
- nurses leading the service have authority regarding workforce matters;^{xviii}
- the nurse led service complies with legal and regulatory requirements, and^{xix}
- evaluation and reporting processes are in place.^{xx}

Like other health leaders, nurses who lead and manage nursing services benefit from having professional and personal support through mentoring, clinical supervision and access to leadership development. The availability of such supports has been associated with increased professional satisfaction and better service outcomes.^{xxi xxii xxiii}

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