

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **ACN backs strategies to expand Australia's nursing workforce** ***Nursing Supply and Demand Study 2023-2035***

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) welcomes the release of the much-needed *Nursing Supply and Demand Study 2023-2035* and supports government programs and initiatives to ensure a highly trained and supported nursing workforce in sufficient numbers to meet the growing needs of the Australian population.

ACN notes that the Study highlights that:

- The number of young nurses is projected to decline,
- There is an encouraging increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses, but more than 50 per cent of them are working in capital cities, and
- The number of employed registered nurse practitioners remains static, but only 75 per cent are employed as nurse practitioners. More specific nurse practitioner jobs must be created.

Interim ACN CEO, Emeritus Professor Leanne Boyd, said today that the Study reflects ACN's concerns about the nursing and broader health workforce, and reinforces ACN's recommendations to Federal and State/Territory governments on how to support nursing to build the necessary workforce.

"The solution is to make better use of nurses at their full scope of practice to provide people with the right care in the right place at the right time, throughout all stages of life," Professor Boyd said.

"Nursing is the largest and most geographically dispersed health profession in Australia, with nurses on the front line of health care in communities across the nation.

"Nurses are often the most qualified health professional living and working in many communities, especially in rural and remote areas. In some communities, a nurse is the only health professional.

"Nurses are highly regarded and respected in the community. People trust nurses and the care they provide in all settings.

"A coordinated strategy – maximising the potential of existing Federal and State and Territory programs and initiatives – is needed to keep nurses in nursing, educate more nurses, and attract nurses back into the profession.

“The National Nursing Workforce Strategy will lead and drive this process.

“Nurses must be at the centre of health policy for the long term. Investing in nurses is a wise decision for all governments,” Professor Boyd said.

In its 2024-25 Pre-Budget Submission, ACN called for a national campaign to promote a positive career in nursing – with many roles in many different locations and opportunities for advancement – to attract more people, especially young people, male and female, to the best profession in the world.

Professor Boyd said nurse career promotion must also target schools to attract young people to a rewarding and lifelong career in nursing.

“The Study disturbingly shows that the percentage of nurses aged under 29 is projected to decrease from 19 per cent in 2022 to 16 per cent in 2035,” Professor Boyd said.

“This is a major concern. We need more young people in nursing.

“The Federal Government has already shown with its teachers’ campaign that promoting a positive image can attract new teachers and keep teachers in the profession they love.

“It can and should do the same for nurses and nursing, Australia’s most-trusted profession.”

Professor Boyd said that ACN has been an active contributor to the health reviews conducted by the Federal Government, including the *Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce (Scope of Practice) Review* and the *Working Better for Medicare Review*.

“We are presenting practical, achievable recommendations to build a nursing workforce in the right numbers with the right qualifications to serve the growing health needs of the Australian population,” Professor Boyd said.

“Investing in nurses is cost effective and will deliver tangible benefits for governments, the nursing profession, the health system, local communities, and patients.”

ACN’s recommendations to bolster and support Australia’s nursing workforce include:

- recruit and retain nurses in nursing and the health workforce as a lifelong career.
- provide incentives to attract qualified nurses back to the profession.
- make use of the skills and experience of older and retired nurses in education, mentoring, and to meet surge demand in pandemics or natural disasters.
- provide lifelong learning opportunities.
- create meaningful and rewarding diverse career pathways.
- and produce a campaign to promote a positive image of nursing to draw young people into nursing as a career and keep nurses in nursing for the long term.

The Nursing Supply and Demand Study 2023-2025 is at [hwd.health.gov.au/supply-and-demand/nursing-supply-demand-study.html](https://hwd.health.gov.au/supply-and-demand/nursing-supply-demand-study.html)

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