

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Empowering nurses will improve healthcare access for all Australians**

#### **ACN Position Statement:**

#### ***Scope of Practice – Registered Nurses in the community setting***

The Australian College of Nursing today released a new Position Statement: *Scope of Practice – Registered Nurses in the community setting*.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) clarifies that *“the scope of nursing practice is not limited to specific tasks, functions, or responsibilities but is a combination of knowledge, judgement, and skill that allows the nurse to perform direct caregiving and evaluate its impact, advocate for patients and health, supervise and delegate to others, lead, manage, teach, undertake research, and develop health policy for health care systems”*.

The ACN Position Statement affirms a need to implement change in clinical practice, organisational structure, and the policy environment so that Registered Nurses (RNs) in community care are better facilitated to work within their scope of practice.

Interim ACN CEO, Emeritus Professor Leanne Boyd, said this shift will improve health outcomes, enhance health service delivery and access, and increase job satisfaction for nurses.

“Nurses working to their full scope of practice will increase access to quality care and improved health outcomes, particularly where healthcare services are currently limited,” Professor Boyd said.

“This will have significant health workforce implications.

“Enabling RNs to work to full scope of practice is a critical retention strategy. It leads to greater job satisfaction as nurses feel valued when their comprehensive training and education are utilised in clinical settings.

“Elevating all members of multi-disciplinary teams, not just RNs, to work to their full scope of practice provides clearer boundaries and improved role clarification. Each health practitioner is using all their skills and experience.

“The scope of practice for nurses at a national level needs to be articulated to allow flexibility in nursing practice and support the organisational context and needs of the communities where RNs are practising.

“This will optimise the health workforce by redirecting health care to share the workload according to available staff capacity.

“Variations in the scope of practice are influenced by factors such as the type of clinical setting and its geographical location.

“If RNs work to full scope of practice in general practice and nurse-led clinics, the extra services available would help meet patient demand to access general practice services promptly, especially in places where other health professionals are in short supply and health resources are limited.

“As all healthcare professionals become enabled to work to their scope of practice, the opportunities to adopt and adapt to interdisciplinary models of care grow.

“This presents us with the exciting opportunity to align health service delivery with contemporary thinking and the real-life experiences of nurses providing direct care.

“The innovative changes proposed in the *Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce – Scope of Practice Review* represent a genuine – and unprecedented – possibility that all health professionals in all healthcare settings will work collaboratively to provide improved outcomes for patients and communities,” Professor Boyd said.

In its Position Statement, ACN calls on Federal, State, and Territory governments to:

- Fund nurse-led activity and assign MBS item numbers that optimise full scope of practice of nursing.
- Remove existing regulatory, policy, legislative, and interjurisdictional barriers that negatively impact organisations to enable nurses’ ability to work to their full scope of practice.
- Invest in a national education framework that provides opportunities for nurses at all stages of their careers to access the appropriate education, training, and support for skills acquisition necessary to work and grow to their full scope of practice.
- Align future health investment to broaden innovative nurse-led and interdisciplinary models of care that reimagine traditional health service models.

The ACN Position Statement: *Scope of Practice – Registered Nurses in the community setting* can be found [here](#).

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