

MEDIA RELEASE

5 November 2024

ACN urges action on key recommendations from Scope of Practice Review

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) welcomes the findings and recommendations of the Final Report of the *Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce - Scope of Practice Review*, released today by the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler.

ACN is urging the Government to respond positively to the recommendations and ‘unleash’ the full potential of nurses and midwives, the largest and most geographically dispersed health profession in Australia.

ACN CEO, Professor Kathryn Zeitz FACN, said the Review acknowledges and explains the restrictions, barriers, and inconsistencies across States and Territories that prevent nurses, nurse practitioners, and midwives from working to the full capability of their skills, education, and experience.

“The community benefits when the nursing profession is empowered and supported to work to its full scope of practice,” Professor Zeitz said.

“ACN agrees with Minister Butler when he said in releasing the Final Report ‘...removing these barriers would make it easier for Australians to get high quality care, when and where they need it, without waiting weeks for an appointment’.

“ACN members experience daily the barriers that get in the way of working better together across disciplines.

“All health professionals would have greater job satisfaction, making it more likely they would stay in their professions for longer if these restrictions were removed.”

Professor Zeitz said the Review findings highlight that general community awareness of the scope of practice of all health professionals is limited.

“This is especially true of the nursing profession. ACN has been calling on the Government to fund a national image of nursing campaign to educate the community about the depth and breadth of high-quality nurse-led health care. An image of nursing campaign would help with recruitment and retention of nurses and create more appealing career pathways for nurses. The Review is further evidence of the need for such a campaign,” Professor Zeitz said.

“ACN calls on all governments to urgently address the existing legislative and regulatory barriers that limit the ability of health professionals to work to their full scope.

“ACN is advocating for a **‘competency passport’** to support nurses to work to their full scope when they move between organisations and across State and Territory borders.

“More contemporary blended funding models must be introduced to complement the Medicare fee for service model if communities are to access the care they need when they need it.

“There is a pressing need to reimagine how care is delivered and by whom, but this is not possible within existing funding models.

“Multidisciplinary and nurse-led innovative models of care currently exist in many communities. They are popular with patients – because they work. They provide better patient access, they keep people out of emergency departments, and they are affordable.

“New significant investment in new models and scaling models that have demonstrated successful outcomes is essential to meet increasing healthcare needs across primary health care settings, especially in rural and regional Australia.

“The recommendation to establish an independent mechanism to advise on workforce design will support this reform and the reimagining of healthcare service models.”

ACN priorities include:

- Strong cohesive and collaborative leadership with all disciplines working together to meet the needs of their communities.
- We need to address cultural barriers, respect interdisciplinary scope, and value the unique contributions of all members of the team.
- Cross-disciplinary education programs to assist disciplines to work together in scenario-based settings to experience first-hand the contribution of each other in caring for patients holistically.
- The development of a national skills and capability framework and matrix. This will ensure that the right skill set can be better applied to meet specific community needs.

“In tandem with regulatory reform, we must support all disciplines, including nurses, to consistently apply their full suite of skills and expertise to care for patients.

“The ultimate winners from the implementation of the recommendations of this important Scope of Practice Review will be patients across the nation – especially rural, regional, remote, First Nations, and underserved communities,” Professor Zeitz said.

ACN will fully study all the details of the comprehensive Final Report before further comment.

For more information:

Kirsty Waterford 0403 295 934

Email: acn.media@acn.edu.au

Australian College of Nursing (ACN)

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) provides a unifying voice for nursing in Australia by bringing together nurses from all States and Territories, healthcare settings, and specialties to advance the profession and enhance healthcare delivery. ACN actively addresses critical issues in healthcare and nursing, by advocating for change with key influencers to improve health services and outcomes nationwide. At ACN, we believe that every nurse has the potential to lead and make a significant impact. Our members are at the heart of our mission—they are leaders, educators, and researchers who inspire and enact real change in the nursing field. We support our members through advocacy, education, and a powerful professional network to provide quality care and improve the health of all Australians.

Social media channels: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/acnursing>
X(Twitter): https://twitter.com/acn_tweet
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/australian-college-of-nursing>
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/acn_nursing