

A strong nurse workforce for a healthy Australia



2020-21
Pre-Budget
Submission

apna 
*Supporting nurses in
primary health care*

4 solutions for a strong nurse workforce



Investment

1

Powerful data to understand nurses, Australia's largest primary health care workforce

Understand the largest primary healthcare workforce and underpin six national health strategies with a comprehensive Primary Health Care Nursing Workforce Survey.

\$4.9M
over 10 years

2

Grow the primary health care nurse workforce with quality student placements

Establish a nationally funded primary health care nursing placement system for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Increase primary health care nursing placement opportunities nationally to 8,000, with 3,000 of these in rural/ remote settings.

\$24.7M
over 4 years

3

Increase the diversity of the primary health care nurse workforce

Enhance recruitment and retention of the primary health care nursing workforce with a national marketing campaign.

\$7.1M
over 4 years

4

Recover the aged care nursing workforce

Establish a campaign to rebuild confidence in the role of nurses in the aged care sector and increase understanding of the important work of aged care nurses.

Establish a transition to practice program for new nurses to the aged care sector to increase retention.

Establish a 24 hour telephone support line for aged care nurses.

\$8M
over 4 years

1 Powerful data to understand nurses, Australia's largest primary health care workforce

Understand the largest primary health care workforce and underpin six national health strategies with a comprehensive Primary Health Care Nursing Workforce Survey.

 *Investment*
\$4.9M over 10 years

The benefits

- Robust data to underpin policy reforms such as the: Primary Health Care 10 Year plan; National Preventive Health Strategy; Stronger Rural Health Strategy; Aged Care Workforce Strategy, Nurse 2030 Workforce Strategy.
- Contribute to the National Primary Health Care Data Asset.
- Underpin strategies to build the primary health care nurse workforce and increase workforce retention.

Why this is vital

Primary Health Care (PHC) Nurses are the largest workforce in primary health care but are invisible in current national datasets. This limits effective policy making and reduces the ability to fully utilise PHC Nurses to enhance the health system and improve population health outcomes.

With at least 82,000 PHC nurses working across Australia, it is vital to capture and measure robust longitudinal data of what primary health care nurses are doing in order to plan feasible, actionable strategy to underpin the Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan, Nursing 2030 Strategy, Aged Care Workforce and the broader population health workforce strategies.

APNA is aware that the National Primary Health Care Data Asset will contain data about primary health care to assist in a more comprehensive understanding of the health system. However, this Data Asset

appears to be focused on general practice activity data in the short term, with the consultation paper acknowledging the need for inclusion of a broader range of primary health care activity data over time.

APNA currently collects data on the primary health care nursing workforce via an Annual Workforce Survey. This dataset could be strengthened to better inform future health workforce planning and contribute to the National Primary Health Care Data Asset.

Solution 1

Funding the Primary Health Care Nursing Workforce Survey will provide:

- Funding for an APNA and Monash University collaborative partnership to deliver a decade of quality data and insights into Primary Health Care Nurses.
- Grow the current APNA Workforce Survey to deliver the first comprehensive dataset about primary health care nurse activity in Australia – with a comprehensive reach across all sectors of primary health care (aged care, general practice, community care and beyond).
- Significant contribution to the evidence base about primary health care nursing.
- Facilitate Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) access to the APNA workforce survey data to contribute to the National Primary Health Care Data Asset and inform Government health reforms.

2 Grow the primary health care nurse workforce with quality student placements

Establish a nationally funded primary health care nursing placement system for both undergraduate and postgraduate students

Increase primary health care nursing placement opportunities nationally to 8,000, with 3,000 of these in rural/remote settings



Investment

\$24.7M over 4 years

The benefits

Attracting and retaining nurses in primary health care settings is imperative to addressing the challenges facing the health system. A nationally funded placement system will:

Short term

- Provide a greater number of clinical placement options for nursing students.
- Increase consideration of primary health care nursing as a career option.
- Enhance student clinical knowledge and skills.
- Provide greater linkages with health service providers in a variety of settings.
- Increase capacity in general practice.
- Reduce the burden on nursing faculties to source PHC placements.

Medium term

- Increase retention of experienced primary health care nurse supervisors
- Address the current shortage of student nurse clinical placements

Long term

- Address the impending nurse workforce shortage
- Contribute to achieving the objectives of *Australia's* Long Term National Health Plan

Why this is vital

The *Educating the Nurse of the Future* report highlights that there are insufficient clinical placement opportunities for nursing students with some students unable to complete their course on time.

Nursing curriculum and placement opportunities in Australia are predominantly acute-care focused and most nursing students do not have a primary health care experience as part of their studies. Because of this, most primary health care nurses enter the profession as mid-career nurses. Often they do this without strong support or prior opportunity to learn about the PHC clinical setting they are entering. Nursing curriculum and placements should reflect the shifting focus of health care delivery from hospital to primary and community care sectors.

Clinical placements provide an opportunity to enhance and shape a student's attitudes and learning experiences. Limited exposure to settings outside of the acute sector results in reduced choice and readiness to practise in other clinical settings, such as primary health care.

Providing nursing students with exposure to primary health care nursing will increase consideration of primary health care as nurses seek employment opportunities on graduation.

Solution 2

APNA, in consultation with Universities, TAFEs, PHC employers and other professional peak groups, will develop a flexible primary health care placement system.

APNA's significant primary health care nursing database can enable 8,000 additional nursing placements and match suitable nursing students to high quality placements with experienced registered nurses (RN) and nurse practitioners (NP).

Nursing supervisors will have access to a support service to ensure the facilitation of quality student placements. The service will include a comprehensive supervisor training package and regular access to support service staff for individualised advice and support.

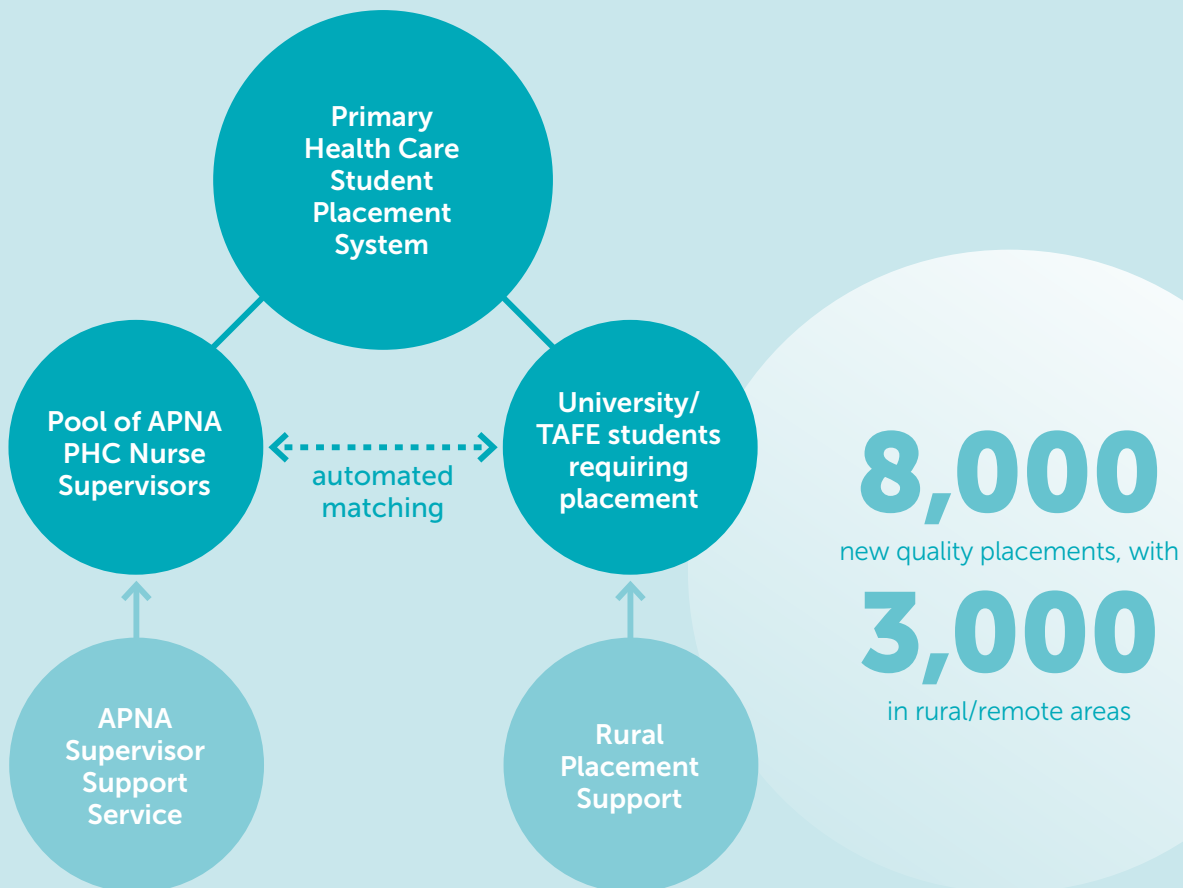
Both supervisors and students will have the ability to rank their placement experience via the online

placement platform. The data will be used by the support service team to work with placement providers and supervisors to enhance their placement experiences.

The *Educating the Nurse of the Future* report reveals cost as a barrier to regional nursing placements as students must pay their own expenses. Given that medical students have regional placement travel and accommodation costs covered, APNA believes this opportunity should be extended to nursing students and has included rural placement support as part of this placement system model.

This concept is supported by the Council of Nursing Deans and multiple General Practice stakeholders. APNA is already working on a pilot model of this project with Monash University to trial a placement system for around 200 students and multiple primary health care providers.

The diagram below depicts key elements of the placement system model and its expected outputs.



3 Increase the diversity of the primary health care nurse workforce

Enhance recruitment and retention of the primary health care nursing workforce with a national marketing campaign



Investment

\$7.1M over 4 years

The benefits

Short to medium term

- Increase visibility of the primary health care nursing profession and the breadth and scope of the PHC nurse role.
- Enhance understanding of the role of a primary health care nurse in team based care.
- Increase consideration of primary health care nursing as a career option for early and mid-career nurses
- Increase retention of experienced primary health care nurses.

Long term

- Address the impending nurse workforce shortage
- Increase the diversity of the PHC nurse workforce
- Contribute to achieving the objectives of Australia's Long Term National Health Plan

Why this is vital

With an impending shortage of nurses and the current PHC nurse workforce having an average age of 49 years and a median age of 52 years, the health system needs to attract new nurses into PHC.

Australia can no longer wait for nurses to enter primary health care in mid-career. Increasing the profile of PHC nursing is essential to attract new nurses and retain the current nurse workforce. Furthermore, we need to increase the diversity of the nurse workforce to better meet Australia's diverse community and health needs.

The *Educating the Nurse of the Future* report recommends that "The Commonwealth Department of Health should fund a national campaign designed to attract under-represented groups to nursing". This campaign intends to appeal to a wide variety of population groups including men and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The primary health care nursing role and scope is broad and poorly understood.

Perceptions and attitudes by other health professionals and employers about the role of primary health care nurses limit the ability of nurses to work to their full scope of practice. The scope and functions of primary health care nursing have evolved and expanded into some areas of practice that have traditionally or historically been assumed the responsibility of other medical professionals. A greater understanding and support for the full breadth of the primary health care nurse role by all members of the health care team is essential to enhancing effective team based and person centred care.

The APNA Workforce Survey of 2,052 primary care nurses in Australia was published in MJA Insight earlier this year.

Respondents reported their education, training and qualifications **were not used to the full extent in their current role.**



27% felt they could do more



12% didn't get to use their knowledge and skills to the full extent

47.5%

suggested to their employer or manager that they could better use their skill set to **undertake more complex clinical activities, or extend their role in the workplace within their scope of practice.**

Of those nurses who suggested to their employer or manager that they could perform more complex activities within their scope of practice

42%

were able to negotiate more complex tasks or extended roles.



The survey:

- Signals potential issues in workforce retention. Nurses that are unable to work to their full scope of practice are less likely to remain in the primary health care workforce.
- Signals a desire to play a greater role in primary health care. Nurses are ready to enhance team based care to meet the needs of an ageing population and high chronic disease burden.
- Reveals most primary health care nurses enter the profession as mid-career nurses. There is an opportunity to increase the visibility of primary health care nursing as a first choice career option.

Solution 3

APNA has developed a marketing campaign titled, *Primary Health Care Nursing, where great nurses go to do more.* The concept builds on APNA's Career and Education Framework and aims to illustrate the varied and extensive skillset of a primary health care nurse and the rewarding career that can be provided in primary health care.

APNA has designed the campaign to:

- Increase the profile of primary healthcare nursing
- Encourage student nurses to consider PHC nursing
- Encourage tertiary nurses considering a career outside hospitals to consider PHC nursing
- Assist greater utilisation of PHC nurses by increasing understanding of a PHC nurse scope of practice
- Increase retention of PHC nurses by building pride and recognition of their work
- Assist in achieving the government's stated target to recruit 3,000 additional nurses

4

Recover the aged care nursing workforce

Establish a campaign to rebuild confidence in the role of nurses in the aged care sector and increase understanding of the important work of aged care nurses.

Establish a transition to practice program for new nurses to the aged care sector to increase retention.

Establish a 24 hour telephone support line for aged care nurses.



Investment

\$8M over 4 years

The benefits

- Contribute to addressing workforce issues in the aged care sector as identified in the Royal Commission into Aged Care.
- Nursing in aged care is underpinned with strong data to inform workforce strategies.
- Increase recruitment and diversity in the aged care sector.

Why this is vital

The Royal Commission into Aged Care has identified significant challenges in attracting, training, retaining and sustaining the nurse workforce.

It is predicted that 3.5 million Australians will be accessing aged care services every year, and the aged care workforce will need to at least double by 2050 to meet the projected target of 980,000 workers.

The numbers of nurses working in aged care settings has been decreasing over time. The adverse publicity surrounding the Royal Commission is likely to intensify this decline.

Solution 4

APNA has developed a campaign concept to help recover the nursing workforce. Working in conjunction with the aged care sector, APNA will:

- Establish an aged care nurse workforce taskforce to review the sector requirements
- Have a regular aged care stream at the annual APNA conference to support nurses working in the sector
- Establish a marketing campaign that:
 - Increases the profile of aged care nursing
 - Encourages student nurses to consider PHC nursing
 - Provides an annual award presented by the Aged Care Minister for excellence in aged care nursing
- Increase retention of new aged care nurses by partnering with industry to establish a transition to aged care program
- Establish a 24 hour telephone support line for aged care nurses
- Maintain a database that captures key data from the 24 hour support line to inform workforce strategies.



About APNA

The Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA) is the peak professional body for nurses working in primary health care. APNA champions the role of primary health care nurses; to advance professional recognition, ensure workforce sustainability, nurture leadership in health, and optimise the role of nurses in patient-centred care.

APNA is bold, vibrant and future-focused. We reflect the views of our membership and the broader profession by bringing together nurses from across Australia to represent, advocate, promote and celebrate the achievements of nurses in primary health care.

www.apna.asn.au

Our Vision

A healthy Australia through best practice primary health care nursing.

Our Mission

To improve the health of Australians, through the delivery of quality evidence-based care by a bold, vibrant and well supported primary healthcare nursing workforce.

Contact us

APNA welcomes further discussion about this submission. Contact:

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Australian
Primary Health Care Nurses
Association

