

For immediate release

Education crisis threatens Federal plans to tackle nursing shortage

Federal government plans for extra nursing places in universities could be thwarted by ageing infrastructure, a lack of clinical placements and a shortage of educators, nursing education leaders have warned today (18 March, 2008).

The peak nursing organisation representing the nation's 37 Schools of Nursing warned many schools could not cope with 1500 extra nursing students in the short term because of a crisis in the availability of clinical placements for nursing students.

Professor John Daly, Chair of the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand) said while the Council welcomed the Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard's review of higher education and the extra places in universities, additional funding was needed to ensure extra nursing students would get a high quality education.

"The clinical placement situation has reached a crisis point where schools have to devote lots of time and effort finding placements for students, especially in areas such as mental health. In large teaching hospitals, there is competition with other health professionals who are also searching for optimal learning environments.

"The clinical placement system will be put under even more pressure if we have an extra 1500 students.

"Nursing education has been chronically under-funded and the physical infrastructure is stretched to capacity in many schools," said Professor Daly.

Speaking immediately after the Council's executive meeting in Adelaide Professor Daly, added there was a shortage of qualified and experienced clinical educators and the quality of applicants could become an issue with any surge in places.

“We need to work with the Federal Government to make sure that these places are allocated carefully and in a timely way so we don’t put more pressure on an already overstretched system. We will be seeking a meeting with the Deputy PM's office to work out the best way forward,” said Professor Daly.

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The Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand) (CDNM) is the peak organisation that represents the 42 Deans and Heads of the Schools of Nursing and Midwifery in Australia and New Zealand
<http://www.cdnm.edu.au>