



MEDIA RELEASE

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Consultation the key to safety and quality in health care

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) today congratulated the incoming Labor Government on its appointment and urged it to honour its commitment to the future excellence in health care by dropping the outgoing Government's plan to open 25 new nursing schools in hospitals, a plan developed without any consultation with the nursing profession.

"The hospital of today is very different to that of 20 years ago. Acuity has increased, length of stay has decreased, increased technology has changed the delivery of healthcare and so the needs of patients have changed. We need to educate nurses and midwives to meet the health care needs of today's community through safe, effective and contemporary practice." said Professor Mary Chiarella, Chairperson of the ANMC.

"Clinical practice in the hospital setting remains one essential component of all nursing and midwifery courses, however, undergraduate nursing and midwifery students currently receiving education in hospitals are additional to and supported by fully qualified staff. There is a potential risk to patient care and safety if students are to be counted as part of hospital nursing and midwifery staff and relied upon to provide essential services for which they are not fully qualified or prepared. It would be like using pilots who have not completed their courses in landing"

All courses of education for nurses and midwives are accredited by the Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authorities for delivery by institutions that are appropriately accredited. This is an essential mechanism to ensure the quality of education meets the requirements of the community. Theoretical learning is underpinned by clinical practice gained in a range of practice settings. The range of practice settings reflects the diversity of healthcare delivery in Australia. Restricting the education of nurses to acute care hospital settings will not equip them to deliver safe care in other practice settings.

"The ANMC is very concerned about the potential impact on the standard and quality of care, should such a scheme go ahead. Nurses and midwives are the most trusted members of the healthcare workforce. It is vital that the community is able to continue to have confidence in the nursing and midwifery workforce, which is the largest component of the health workforce and provides a 24 hour surveillance role for safety in hospitals. "

"We look forward to a new era of consultation with the Rudd Government to develop options for addressing the workforce shortage that provide a diverse range of clinical experience options and do not pose a risk to quality and safety for the community. "Professor Chiarella said.

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**Media Contact: Ms Karen Cook. CEO
Phone: 02 6274 9102 or 0410 663 895**

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) is the peak organisation comprising membership of all state and territory Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authorities (NMRAs). The ANMC provides leadership and expertise in setting national standards for the nursing and midwifery professions, working with the NMRAs and consulting widely with health professionals and consumers to establish standards which are flexible, effective and responsive to the health care requirements of the Australian population. The ANMC is also an assessing authority for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and undertakes skills assessments of internationally qualified nurses and midwives seeking permanent migration to Australia.