

Media Release

Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand) – 18.10.07. 11am AEST

A cheque book approach to the problem of the nursing workforce shortage, alone, is insufficient. Attention needs to be paid to enhancing capacity for quality clinical placements and supervision across the health and aged care sectors.

The announcement of new places for undergraduate nursing education will go some way towards addressing the shortage of registered nurses into the future.

The shortage of Registered Nurses obviously has a negative effect on patient care. It also needs to be recognised that it affects the capacity of undergraduate nurse preparation programmes to absorb greater intakes, given its impact on the availability and quality of clinical supervision.

An imperative which continues to be ignored by successive governments at all levels is the need for a systematic audit of the number of suitable clinical placements across all states and territories. Merely offering extra university (or indeed hospital) places for nursing when there is great uncertainty over whether they will be able to be placed successfully in practical settings, seems to the Council, a questionable solution.

History tells us that without concurrent solutions for slowing down the loss of Registered Nurses from the health and aged care sectors, solutions based purely on increasing supply are doomed to failure.

As the peak body for nurse education in Australia and New Zealand, Council would welcome any opportunity to assist and/or collaborate with the current government or opposition, in relation to finding workable solutions to issues of nursing supply and capability. Historically this has not happened and hence solutions to this international issue have rarely been effective.

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