

**Media release [29 January 2007]
Nurse Workforce Futures released**

The Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand) today released *Nurse Workforce Futures*, prepared for the Council by Barbara Preston. The report develops and applies a model of the demand for and supply of graduates of Australian and New Zealand pre-registration nursing and midwifery courses to the year 2010.

The Chair of the Council, Professor John Daly, said,

‘This report makes a valuable contribution to registered nurse and midwifery workforce planning. The model incorporates significant factors such as the impact on demand for nurses resulting from the ageing of the Australian and New Zealand populations, the international movement of nurses and midwives, and the accumulating effects of shortages.’

‘The projections can help universities plan intakes for nurse and midwifery courses, and inform the policies of other agencies concerned with the recruitment and retention of nurses and midwives’, he said.

In the report there are projections of comparable supply of and demand for graduates of pre-registration nursing and midwifery courses for each Australian state and territory and New Zealand. In addition, there are projections for different scenarios such as improvements in staffing levels in those jurisdictions where staffing levels have been low and shortages most severe; successful implementation of strategies to improve retention; or changes in the international movement of nurses and midwives.

Based on ‘standard’ assumptions, a 2006 Australia-wide shortfall of 3,243 (1.6 per cent of the workforce) is projected to reduce to 470 by 2010.

Professor Daly noted

‘While the 2010 projected shortfall appears small, it is effectively quite substantial because the current situation of shortage means that staffing levels need improvement to ensure that care is adequate, working hours are not excessive and vacancies not left unfilled. In addition, a surplus of some magnitude is necessary for the matching of individual nurses and midwives to particular vacancies.’

Improvements in staffing levels will increase projected shortages. For example, if the Australia-wide staffing level was progressively improved to that prevailing in South Australia in 2003, then the 2010 shortfall is projected to be around 7,900 (3.6 per cent of the RN workforce).

Some Australian states are projected to have very substantial shortages. For example, Queensland is projected to have a 2010 shortfall of 1,461 (3.8 per cent of the workforce). If Queensland’s initially low staffing level is progressively improved to that of Australia as a whole, then the projected shortage almost doubles (to 2,849, or seven per cent of the workforce in that state).

The reductions in projected shortages across Australia are largely a consequence of significant increases in the projected supply of graduates through the period, including graduates from the new paces announced by the Australian Government in 2006.

Australia-wide, the underlying demand for graduates is projected to increase by about four per cent a year to 2010. This is expected to continue through the subsequent decade because RN net separation rates and the effects of population ageing are expected to continue to increase each year, even though overall population growth is projected to slow.

For New Zealand, shortfalls are projected to remain fairly constant through the period at less than one per cent of the workforce, with an increase in the projected shortfall after an initial improvement. New Zealand staffing levels are low, and if they are progressively improved by 2010 to a level equivalent to the Australian average, then the shortage is projected to become very severe – 2,296 or 5.7 per cent of the RN workforce. Underlying demand is projected to increase by just under four per cent a year to 2010, and, like Australia, is expected to continue at a similar annual rate through the following decade.

Attached is a summary of the report.

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The full text is available on the Council's website, <http://www.cdnm.edu.au>