



Australian College of Nurse Practitioners response to:

The Department of Health and Aged Care

- Bill for the new Aged Care Act
- Exposure draft for public consultation

Contact:

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Department of Health and Aged Care - New Aged Care Act Consultation
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Dear consultation team,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to the Exposure draft for public consultation of the new Aged Care Act.

The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners (ACNP) is the national peak organisation for Nurse Practitioners, advancing nursing practice and consumer access to health care. A key focus for the role and scope of practice development for Nurse Practitioners is on unmet needs within the community and increasing access to health care.

In response to the consultation questions:

1. Do we describe a rights-based approach well? Is it clear that older people will be at the centre of aged care?

The ACNP acknowledges the importance of a rights-based approach in aged care and emphasises the shift to a primary point of focus for older people in this framework. The rights of older people have been clearly articulated and prioritised within the new Aged Care Act and will ensure their autonomy, dignity, and well-being are upheld.

2. Is it clear how older people's rights will be upheld?

The ACNP recognises that a clear description of how older people's rights will be upheld is contained within the new Aged Care Act. This includes provisions for informed consent, privacy, dignity, and the right to participate in decisions regarding their care. Additionally, mechanisms for addressing grievances and ensuring accountability for upholding these rights have been clearly outlined.

3. Is it clear how older people will be empowered to make decisions?

Empowering older people to make decisions about their care is vital. The ACNP notes that the new Aged Care Act outlines strategies to support and facilitate the active involvement of older

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individuals in decision-making processes related to their care, including access to information, advocacy, and support for decision-making capacity.

4. *Is it clear what aged care providers and workers must do?*

The ACNP notes there is clarity regarding the responsibilities of aged care providers and workers within the new Aged Care Act. This includes defining their obligations to provide safe, high-quality care, respect the rights and autonomy of older individuals, and engage in person-centered care practices.

Nurse practitioners are employed in various healthcare environments, such as general practice, primary care clinics, aged care, urgent care clinics, acute and emergency services and community health centres.^{2,3} Research has demonstrated that patients express high levels of satisfaction with the care provided by nurse practitioners.⁴⁻⁸ Improved patient satisfaction is not only a positive outcome but can also contribute to better adherence to treatment plans and improved health outcomes, potentially reducing the overall cost of care.

The ACNP urges alignment in the Aged Care Act, with the Nurse Practitioner Workforce Plan¹ released by the Department of Health in May 2023, which describes ways to remove barriers around the Nurse Practitioner Scope of Practice. Addressing legislative barriers that do not have a clinical basis and do not align with other legislation is paramount for consistency across states and territories. It is in the interest of national uniformity that nurse practitioners are enabled through legislation which is constant across state and commonwealth instruments. The benefits of nurse practitioners in aged care have been well documented, however we have not yet been able to see the full benefit through optimisation of the role and workforce.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this important review. We are happy to be contacted to participate further or provide clarification.

Yours sincerely



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Supporting Nurse Practitioners through advocacy
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