

This submission will specifically address one of the terms of reference, ie: "To make recommendations on educational preparation required for nurses to meet future health, aged care and disability needs of the Australian community including clinical training".

Context

At the Cairns *Educating the Nurse of the Future* consultation, it was discussed that many novice RNs have had not acquired the essential skills of nursing (time management, prioritising, clinical assessment, therapeutic communication, etc) during their undergraduate course.

It was revealed that many of the other 21 *Educating the Nurse of the Future* consultations considered the notion of adding a year on the 3 year nursing degree, with the 4th year to serve as a way to acquire/embed the essential skills of nursing.

Suggested Recommendation

Add on extra time at the beginning of undergraduate degree rather than the end. That is:

- all nurses undertake an 18 month Enrolled Nurse (EN) course in the first instance
- successful completion of 18 month EN course allows entry to the Bachelor of Nursing/Nursing Science course
- as is common practice already, ENs attract recognition of prior learning, leaving them an additional 2 years of full time study to become an RN (ie: 18 months + 2 years = a 3½ course)

Positives

- Multiple exit points for student nurses (ie: at 18 months as an EN and at 3½ years as an RN)
- A common grounding in the essentials (sometime called "basics") of nursing
- Student RNs have capacity to work as ENs = revenue stream
- Student RNs have capacity to work as ENs = more exposure to clinical work while undergrad RNs. This, in turn, improves skills in the essentials of nursing while an undergraduate, which is good for patient care
- Hospitals and aged care facilities have access to a large pool of ENs. Unlike student nurses being used as pseudo-AINs, a pool of ENs are much more capable of carrying a patient load

Negatives

- Universities will hate it. This measure would decrease their income. It should be expected that universities will strongly resist the introduction of this novel alternative, UNLESS they can find a way to provide the EN course as well as the RN course (in doing so they will increase their income)
- The TAFE sector isn't currently ready to take-on this increased load
- Students will be disappointed that their 3 year pathway to become an RN suddenly becomes a 3½ year journey. This is offset by 2 things: at least it's not 4 years as others have suggested + after 18/12 they have access to a reasonable income stream.

Reference

McNamara, Paul (@meta4RN) "Replace 1st year of Uni to become an RN, with 18 months at TAFE to become an EN = - Two exit points - Capacity for an income stream while completing study - Acquire firm base in the essentials of nursing (the human stuff) #Cairns #OzNurse #FutureNurse" 26 June 2019, 10:49 am, Tweet.

<https://twitter.com/meta4RN/status/1143682613539774465>

Paul McNamara, BN, MMHN, FACMHN

Clinical Nurse Consultant

Consultation Liaison Psychiatry Service

Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service

Cairns Hospital

paul.mcnamara@health.qld.gov.au

P: +617 4226 8331

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