

Hello. Within this email, I will mainly focus on enrolled nurses as that is my area of expertise.

I am a registered nurse who has taught and supported enrolled nurses in the tertiary sector plus clinical settings for over 20 years. During all of this time I have noticed there have been limited career pathways for enrolled nurses along with minimal recognised professional development opportunities. Recently I completed a research paper, which also identified issues around enrolled nurse career and professional development pathways. I will not answer each of the terms of reference (TOR) individually but the information I am providing certainly relates to them all.

There have been numerous of studies/reports over the years that have a common theme relating to issues concerning enrolled nurse education and career opportunities. Two of the most recent reports I will speak to are:

- Nurses in Victoria: A Supply and Demand Analysis 2003-04 to 2011-12 report.
- The Australia's future health workforce – Nurses (2014) report.

Key findings that relate to the TOR are:

- There is a changing nursing workforce which includes aging, retirement, and part-time work requests. These all have an impact on nursing recruitment and retention, opening up possibilities for enrolled nurses to work in a range of areas and receive the appropriate professional development pathways to achieve this
- Workforce planning was highlighted as the key area to address future health workforce requirements and this included looking at changes to a nurse's skill mix. This in turn would require professional development support for specialist areas, such as mental health.
- Coordinated national workforce planning, development and implementation is therefore critical to ensure Australia trains, educates, and develops sufficient numbers of nurses to maintain steady education capacity growth and strong employment opportunities which meet future health needs.
- Required is an increase in the number of nurses required to meet the needs of projected patient numbers.
- Noted was that enrolled nurse student numbers have increased by over one-third between 2009-2012, with no indication that a decrease was likely in the future. What was not increasing was employment of enrolled nurses outside of aged care, for example, areas such as mental health indicated only 15% of nurses working in mental health were enrolled nurses.

Throughout my recent research, I have engaged in industry consultation, conversation with colleagues from other health sectors and tertiary institutes, professional bodies, plus unions. The outcome is from those I have spoken with is that no-one is utilising the Advanced Diploma of Nursing because it is not cost effective and does not provide professional pathways that are then recognised for enrolled nurse to advance in the nursing sector. My understanding is at this stage the Advanced Diploma is the only recognised qualification postgraduate that covers enrolled nursing. There are various health services that are providing transition programs for enrolled nurses, but again none of these are professionally recognised and supported pathways for enrolled nurses.

There is the National Enrolled Nurse Association (NENA), which is according to their website strives to raise the profile and increase public awareness of the enrolled nursing profession across all states and territories. My conversations with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Association (ANMF), which NENA sits under, NENA has minimal input in relation to enrolled nurse professional development opportunities that would support career pathways plus professional recognition. My findings so far are that there are no other professional bodies that support, encourage or advocate on behalf of enrolled nurses around professional development and career pathways. This, until recently, has been a concern of mine also with unions, but discussion with the Health and Community Services Union indicate they are now moving forward with a stronger focus on enrolled nursing opportunities and recognised professional pathways.

Throughout all of my conversations, including the many enrolled nurses I have spoken with, professional pathways that recognise an enrolled nurse are bordering on non-existent. The belief is that for a nurse to be recognised as a professional they can only achieve this by having a Bachelor in Nursing. This is an area that needs to be reconsidered and appropriate professional pathways and support be instituted for enrolled nurses in all areas of nursing.

Another point, although not mentioned in the terms of reference, I believe personal care attendants (PCA's) need to be considered. Within the terms of reference recommendations, it was highlighted that - educational preparation required for nurses to meet future health, aged care and disability needs of the Australian community including clinical training. PCA's are major employees in these areas and yet to date remain unregistered practitioners. They are working with the most vulnerable people who have complex physical and emotional health issues, yet have minimal education/training and then no accountability/responsibility that would come with being a registered practitioner. There are no professional bodies that can advise/support PCA's, only the Health Services Union is available to them; plus Nursing and Midwifery Board offer no guidelines for personal care attendants as they are not a registered person. Having taught many PCA's who wish to go into nursing it is evident and concerning the lack of knowledge they have when considering all of things that keep a person healthy and safe.

So currently all indicators show that there is limited support from industry and relevant professional bodies to increase enrolled nurse undergraduate and postgraduate opportunities and pathways to specific disciplines. Ongoing conversations with relevant industry, professional bodies as well as key service providers may help to improve this, but it may also require acknowledgement and adherence to findings from the current and past reviews/recommendations to propel things forward. What we are seeing now is for an enrolled nurse to be considered a professional in some specialist fields they must do their Bachelor of Nursing to achieve this. One also needs to consider why there continues to be such a focus on registered nurse opportunities and associated pathways, yet limited for enrolled nurses. As highlighted in government reports the onus is on all involved; government, peak bodies, unions and healthcare services to improve our healthcare workforce and the author feels that enrolled nurses are a key qualified resource that currently is underutilized.

Thank you for your time in considering my submission.
Regards Jillian Reid