This consultation paper provides a draft outline of the National Allied Health Workforce Strategy. We are seeking your views on whether the purpose, scope and proposed contents aligns with your understanding of the current challenges for the allied health workforce.

# Consultation Paper: Draft Outline of the National Allied Health Workforce Strategy

## Executive Summary

This section will highlight the need for a Strategy. Key points include:

* Demand for allied health services are increasing. There are many reasons for this, such as:
  + population demographics (for example, our population is growing and there are more people needing services)
  + a move to multidisciplinary team-based approaches to care
  + allied health professions work across many different sectors, which increases the demand for their services.
* There are shortages in most allied health professions. Factors contributing to this include:
  + the right types of professionals not being trained, or simply not enough supply of professionals (for example, First Nations allied health professionals)
  + allied health professionals are leaving their careers early or midway through
  + allied health professionals are entering management positions due to a lack of senior clinical positions
  + there are varied and changing incentives across sectors, which drives workforce movement from one sector to another.
* This is Australia’s first national allied health workforce strategy. It provides an opportunity for governments and industry to work together to improve allied health workforce planning.

The Executive Summary will also summarise the main sections of the Strategy including recommendations and next steps.

## Introduction

This section will summarise who the Strategy is for. It will highlight:

* There is no agreed definition of allied health. The Strategy will acknowledge this and identify some of the broad parameters used to identify allied health professionals in Australia and overseas.
* The Strategy will apply to any health profession that is considered allied health by the Australian Government, state and territory governments and/or the non-government or private sectors.
* The Strategy is intended to be used by the Australian Government, state and territory governments, allied health professionals, health services, universities, regulators, consumers and professional organisations.
* Like the medical and nursing strategies, the allied health strategy aims to outline what steps are needed to ensure there are enough highly trained allied health professionals are accessible across the country.

This section will outline the goals of the Strategy, which are to:

* provide a current picture of the allied health workforce.
* identify how the Australian Government, state and territory governments, universities and professional associations can work together to improve allied health workforce planning.
* consider how to improve training of allied health students so that we have enough professionals working where they are needed most.
* consider how to ensure allied health professionals are skilled to work across the range of different sectors where they are needed.
* consider what is needed to make sure rural communities and First Nations peoples get access to allied health services.
* consider the implications from how we regulate allied health professions and what could be improved.
* improve the workforce data that we collect so that we can understand how many allied health professionals we have in Australia and how many are needed in the future to meet demand.

## Current and future state of allied health in Australia

This section will discuss the role of allied health in the Australian health system.

* It will summarise information on the health of Australians, what are the most prevalent diseases and what is the role of allied health in addressing these.
* It will highlight how allied health professionals:
  + work in a variety of settings
  + are trained to provide assessment, diagnosis and treatment of many health conditions
  + can work on their own, but often work with other health professionals as part of a team.
* It will outline what we know about the workforce, including:
  + information on how allied health professionals are trained
  + size and characteristics of the workforce.
* It will provide links to existing workforce strategies and models of care.
* It will discuss other projects that governments are doing that may have an impact on allied health professionals.

This section will also identify gaps in what we know about the allied health workforce and summarise issues with how we collect information on the allied health workforce.

This section will then discuss reforms and trends that influence the way allied health professionals practice in Australia. This will include:

* providing services virtually (over the phone or internet)
* providing services that require a high level of skill and training, sometimes called ‘advanced scope’
* providing services in newer settings such as the mining industry
* taking on different roles, such as clinical leadership or consultant roles
* whether it is easy or hard for allied health professionals to move between settings or move into more highly skilled jobs.

This section will then discuss whether we are doing enough to make sure consumers are provided with safe and high-quality allied health care. It will discuss:

* the different rules operating in Australia to govern how allied health professionals are regulated
* how we recognise the skills of allied health professionals
* what standards allied health professionals must meet to provide services
* what we want to achieve regarding diversity and inclusion, particularly for our First Nations workforce, and how far we are from that goal
* how consumers are engaged in allied health care and whether we are working with consumers to ask what they want from their care.

## Snapshots of allied health professionals in Australia

This section will identify the sectors where allied health professionals often work in Australia.

Each sector will identify:

* the types of allied health professionals that often work in that sector and what we know about them
* the funding models used
* factors driving workforce supply and demand for that sector
* factors associated with retention, or attrition, of allied health professionals in their chosen profession.

Sectors identified for potential inclusion are:

* acute care (for example, hospitals)
* primary care, for example community health centres
* mental health facilities
* disability care
* aged care
* education and child development (for example, in schools)
* child and family safety
* justice (for example, in correctional facilities and juvenile detention centres)
* First Nations health (for example, in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services)
* university settings (for example, researchers and educators)
* industry and organisational (for example, providing services to people working in the mining industry or in corporate organisations).

This section will also contain case studies that highlight key themes from across the sectors. These may focus on:

* allied health professions that are needed the most/have the greatest shortages
* smaller allied health professions that may be in high demand due to their small size or narrow scope of practice
* new models of care
* differences between providing services in rural and remote Australia in comparison to in urban and city areas.

## Priorities for action

This section will be developed after the first round of consultations. It will identify priorities and actions to take forward through the Strategy.

## Next steps for the National Allied Health Workforce Strategy

This section will be developed after the first round of consultations. This section will identify timeframes and milestones and how we plan to assess the impact of the Strategy.

# Have your say

There is a short survey on the [Consultation Hub](https://consultations.health.gov.au/primary-care-mental-health-division/nahwsoutline) to respond to the draft outline of the National Allied Health Workforce Strategy.

If you’d like to receive updates on the progress of the Strategy, please subscribe to allied health sector updates via the [department’s website](https://www.health.gov.au/using-our-websites/subscriptions/subscribe-to-the-allied-health-sector-updates).