



health system reform

Considerable attention has been given over the last decade in academic, bureaucratic, economic, political, media and policy circles regarding the need for reforming the health system in Australia.

Nurses and midwives form the largest component of the health care workforce and their input is critical to the planning and implementation of reforms.

It is the position of the Australian Nursing Federation that:

1. There are considerable inefficiencies, cost shifting and duplication between all levels of government in the current health system in Australia.
2. The system of health financing needs reform in order to ensure a sustainable health budget to fund the delivery of universal health care.
3. The health system needs reform in order to deliver safe, quality care, that is equitable in terms of access; meets best practice standards in terms of achieving the best possible outcomes; and is delivered around the needs of patients.
4. The current health system is driven by and is centred around a 'medical model' which is hampering reform efforts to develop new service delivery models involving care provided by nurses and midwives within multidisciplinary teams.
5. The current health system needs to focus more on early intervention, health promotion, prevention of illness and injury and the provision of high quality integrated care in the community. This approach aims to expand access to care outside the acute hospital setting including primary health care, aged care and sub-acute care, as well as ensuring better integration between these sectors.
6. For effective health reform, senior nurses and midwives must take a leadership role in influencing planning and implementation of new policy directions.
7. The current health system does not meet the principles of equitable access and this is largely due to the output based system of financing health care and an over emphasis in the Australian Health Care Agreements on hospital-based or acute care.
8. The Australian Health Care Agreements should contain provisions for delivering care that is evidence based as well as containing provisions that ensure accountability and transparency in the delivery of services.

9. Delivery of health care in Australia is limited by the availability of qualified health professionals. Investment from all levels of government is needed to provide adequate funding for additional places for nursing and midwifery in universities and the vocational education and training sector. This should include provision of dedicated funding for appropriate and sufficient clinical education (including placement) that is specifically linked to the student.
10. All levels of government and health care providers should make a commitment to the ethical recruitment of health professionals educated in other countries, particularly those whose own health systems can ill afford to lose them.
11. The organisational structure of all health care provision must have strong nursing and midwifery representation to enable nurses and midwives of all levels to participate in research and decision-making which will drive health care reform.

endorsed by federal executive december 2007

reviewed and re-endorsed by federal executive february 2011