

**Submission  
No 74**

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE No. 2  
RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL HEALTH  
REFORM AND GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION WITH REMOTE, RURAL AND  
REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

**Organisation:** Australian College of Nurse Practitioners (ACNP)

**Date Received:** 30 October 2024



Australian College of Nurse Practitioners response to:

**Parliament of New South Wales**

**The implementation of Portfolio Committee No. 2 recommendations relating to cross-jurisdictional health reform and government consultation with remote, rural and regional communities**

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1 Nov 2024

Dr Joe McGirr  
Committee Chair  
Select Committee on Remote, Rural and Regional Health  
Parliament of New South Wales

*By email:* [remoteruralregionalhealth@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:remoteruralregionalhealth@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Dr McGirr,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the implementation of Portfolio Committee No. 2 recommendations relating to cross-jurisdictional health reform and government consultation with remote, rural and regional communities.

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.

The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners emphasizes that Nurse Practitioners operate independently in various healthcare settings across NSW, including general practice, primary care clinics, urgent care facilities, acute and emergency services, and community health centers. Nurse Practitioner-led care is not a complementary service designed to replace or simply support the medical workforce; rather, they are essential providers of direct, expert care for patients. Their dedication to delivering high-quality, patient-centered services ensures that patients receive the attention and expertise they need for optimal health and well-being. By focusing on holistic approaches and addressing the unique needs of each patient, Nurse Practitioners enhance the healthcare system and contribute significantly to improved health outcomes, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Research has shown that patients consistently report high levels of satisfaction with the independent care provided by Nurse Practitioners.<sup>3-7</sup> This heightened satisfaction not only signifies a positive outcome, but also plays a pivotal role in enhancing patient adherence to treatment plans and ultimately contributes to improved overall wellbeing. Moreover, such positive impacts have the potential to reduce the overall cost of care and enhance patient compliance with addressing their healthcare needs. The demonstrated success of Nurse Practitioners in fostering patient satisfaction highlights their invaluable role in the

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Australian healthcare landscape, representing a significant step towards more effective and cost-efficient healthcare delivery.

The Nurse Practitioner Workforce Plan<sup>8</sup> released by the Department of Health in May 2023, describes ways to remove barriers around the nurse practitioner scope of practice. Removing legislative and operational barriers that do not have a clinical basis and do not align with federal and other states legislation or processes is essential 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.

In this submission, the ACNP addresses recommendations that call for greater integration of the nurse practitioner workforce and increased funding to better support their essential role in improving health equity and outcomes for individuals in rural, regional, and remote areas of NSW.

Our responses address the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 11:**

To enhance the sustainability and growth of health services in rural, regional, and remote areas of NSW, the ACNP endorses recommendation 11. This calls for government investment in the development and implementation of a 10-Year Rural and Remote Medical and Health Workforce Recruitment and Retention Strategy. This strategy should be guided by the established priorities already mapped out in the National Nursing Workforce Strategy and the Nurse Practitioner workforce plan.<sup>8</sup>

**Recommendation 14:**

NSW Health should collaborate with the Australian Government, Primary Health Networks, universities, and specialist medical and nursing colleges to not only expand training positions for rural GPs and specialists but also to enhance interprofessional education and mentorship, which includes nursing, nurse practitioners and allied health. This will help strengthen the workforce in rural and remote areas, improve collaboration, build multidisciplinary teams, and boost participation in training programs for all health services, rather than focusing on GPs in isolation.

It must also be noted that nurse practitioners have for many years provided expert advanced culturally sensitive care and have built strong networks and rapport with patients in regional, rural and remote NSW communities. Collaborating with multidisciplinary teams only enhances and bolsters models of care in

these communities where access to care remains limited. A multidisciplinary approach ensures the care received by patients is provided by the clinician with the appropriate skills and training to consult and treat, and this may be the GP, Nurse Practitioner, Rural Generalist or allied health professional.

**Recommendation 16:**

The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners appreciates the inclusion of our response into the nursing workforce review in recommendation 16, which underscores the necessity for broader implementation of the nurse practitioner model of care in rural, regional, and remote areas. This includes funding for the recruitment and training of additional nurse practitioners, especially in facilities lacking 24/7 doctor coverage or relying on virtual medical services. The ACNP applauds the committee's recommendation that NSW Health collaborate with the Australian Government to tackle the practical barriers to establishing and supporting these roles, including issues related to Medicare subsidies, PBS reform, and the certification of medical documents.

**Recommendation 18:**

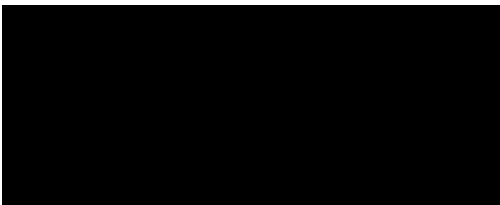
Nurse Practitioners are highly skilled in geriatric care and very well placed to develop and provide other staff members with annual training to ensure an ageing population is given the best evidence-based health care when visiting a health care facility.

**Recommendation 44:**

The ACNP supports recommendation 44, which emphasises policy advocacy and support. This includes working with the Australian Government and NSW Health to promote policies that enhance healthcare delivery in regional, rural, and remote areas. Key actions here involve securing funding for infrastructure and initiatives that apply the Health in All Policies (HiAP) framework to address the unique challenges faced by healthcare teams. Additionally, these policies should consider their effects on both human and environmental health, including preventative health strategies shaped by various social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental determinants of health. Additionally, the HiAP approach aims to ensure that everyone has an equitable opportunity to achieve their full health potential, emphasising that no-one should be disadvantaged if it can be prevented.<sup>9</sup> Nurse Practitioners are key to the provision of regional, rural and remote access to care, and many communities directly benefit from the advanced practice skills of the NP workforce in promoting health preventing disease acquisition an addressing health inequity.

The ACNP applauds the acknowledgment and deliberate contemplation of the role and significance of nurse practitioners within Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health. Report no. 57. and thank you for including us and our responses in the consultation.

Yours sincerely



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