

REVIEW OF PRIMARY & COMMUNITY CARE NURSING

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POLICY CONTEXT

Health care reform is driven by ageing populations and resulting increasing levels of chronic and complex illness, reduction in access to general practitioners and workforce shortages. There is also pressure to improve accessibility of services to underserved groups and communities. Strengthening the role of primary health care and prevention to enhance individual and population health outcomes is important to address the rise in chronic and preventable conditions. Nurses are becoming increasingly central to the delivery of primary health care in Australia. Nurses working in primary health care can help address workforce shortages, improve access to health care and contribute to the management of chronic conditions and illness prevention.

KEY FINDINGS

- Some international evidence indicates that primary health care nurses can provide effective care and achieve positive health outcomes for patients similar to doctors when within the scope of their practice. Nevertheless, there is a lack of evidence in Australia about their role and their impact on health outcomes
- Nurses are good communicators and achieve good patient compliance. They are also able to undertake diverse roles including chronic disease management and health promotion activities
- Nurse education in Australia does not prepare nurses for primary health care. Postgraduate education is piecemeal, lacks consistency and mechanisms for quality assurance
- No career pathways exist for nurses in general practice linking their competencies with skills, education and remuneration
- A range of funding measures have been implemented to support general practice nurses. However, there is no available evidence in Australia indicating if funding models are cost effective or provide efficient and effective health outcomes.

For more details, go to the [three page report](#).

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