

## PREPARING NURSES FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE REFORMS

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### POLICY CONTEXT

Momentum is growing for a nationally driven and funded, integrated primary care service system in Australia. The Federal government has a clear focus on reforming the health system to strengthen prevention and facilitate care at the primary level. Furthermore, there is growing awareness that quality indicators and measures for optimising care for the population, need to part of future reforms. Primary and community care nurses are, as part of an integrated team, in an ideal position to play a key role in the delivery of primary care services as long as they are adequately prepared. Future policy development on the practice nurse role needs to be evidence based and work towards nationally consistent standards for an education framework and career pathways for nurses in primary care, and the development of inter-professional primary care teams. The nurses' role should be supported by funding mechanisms that support the delivery of quality outcomes in primary care.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Extended nursing roles in primary care should be developed within an overarching national framework
- Undergraduate education for nurses needs to evolve to ensure an appropriately prepared nursing workforce to support changes towards community care rather than hospital care
- Post-registration education and training needs to evolve towards credentialing programs that build nurses' expertise and skill base as well as building their career pathways
- Investment is needed to develop inter-professional learning in university medical and health disciplines with inter-professional care being seen as central to the development and delivery of quality health care
- Nurses can play a central role in achieving quality outcomes in primary care and have key roles in the management of chronic conditions but are under-utilised in Australia. Funding mechanisms should reflect the central role nurses can play in the delivery of cost-effective, better health outcomes.

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

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