
Message from the Commonwealth Chief Nursing
and Midwifery Officer, Professor Alison McMillan



Newsletter

Alison McMillan
Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer



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Dear Nurses and Midwives

I write to you from Ngunnawal Country where I am enjoying watching the Canberra trees start to turn on their brilliant autumn colours.

I would like to update you on the 2022-23 Budget which was handed down by the Treasurer, the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, and includes significant funding for health - \$132 billion in 2022–23, and \$537 billion over the next 4 years. This includes primary health care, aged care, mental health and suicide prevention, and the health of Australia’s women and girls.

In order to support Australians during this Pandemic and into the future, it is important that we support our student nurses and midwives and those new to the profession. One of the highlights of the Government’s Budget for nursing and midwifery includes an investment into nurses’ training and professional development.

- \$14.9 million will be invested to work with higher education providers and care and support providers to facilitate new, quality clinical placements for up to 5,250 students, with a target of 2.86% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.
- \$14.3 million has been allocated to expand the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program to an additional five locations in the Northern Territory, Victoria, New South Wales and remote Queensland.
- \$10.8 million for the Allied Health and Nursing Stream of the National Mental Health Pathways to Practice Program, providing up to 660 supervised nursing and allied health

student and graduate mental health placements across rural, remote and metropolitan areas over three years.

There will also be investment in critical resources for Bachelor of Nursing students and allied health students undertaking clinical placements in the health and support sectors.

The Government will also provide \$1.0 million in 2022-23 for 'Vivian Bullwinkel Scholars', for the establishment of 21 scholarships through the Australian College of Nursing to support nurses seeking to further their professional development in leadership.

Improving access to cancer screening also featured in the 2022-23 Budget, with \$4.1 million invested to allow nurses and other providers to deliver cervical screening through providing funding to laboratories to process tests. A colonoscopy triage nurse pilot also has \$10.2 million invested to help improve colonoscopy access.

I am very pleased to confirm the Government has committed to appoint a Senior Midwifery Advisor to improve the quality of policies and programs implementing the *Woman-Centred Care: Strategic Directions for Australian Maternity Services* and to assist with consultation and mapping maternity services models. The Senior Midwifery advisor will work with me and Adjunct Professor Ruth Stewart, the Rural Health Commissioner, to improve access to maternity services in rural and remote communities.

Midwives are instrumental in supporting women through pregnancy and in the tragic case of a losing a child in stillbirth or miscarriage. A new investment of \$23 million over four years from 2022-23 was announced to increase maternal health and bereavement support for women and families experiencing stillbirth and miscarriage, in line with the *National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan*. The funding will also go towards increasing the number of stillbirth autopsies to improve understanding of the cause of these tragic deaths, to help achieve the goal of reducing stillbirths by 20% or more by December 2025, and ensure families experiencing stillbirth receive respectful and supportive bereavement care.

The breakdown of this funding includes:

- \$4.2 million over four years from 2022-23 for Red Nose to continue delivering the Hospital to Home program to provide intensive support for families following stillbirth;
- \$5.1 million over four years from 2022-23 for bereavement support programs for women and families who lose a baby through stillbirth or miscarriage; and
- \$13.7 million over three years from 2022-23 to increase the number of stillbirth autopsies which includes:
 - \$11.2 million to create a dedicated Perinatal Pathologist position in each state and territory.

The important role nurses play in preventing and managing COVID-19 outbreaks in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs), has been recognised in the 2022-23 Budget, with \$37.6 million to be invested to support aged care nurses' access to infection prevention and control leadership training. 4,000 training places for RNs in RACFs to become Authorised Nurse Immunisers have also been provided, as part of a \$50.4 million investment to ensure RACFs are better placed to distribute seasonal influenza and COVID-19 vaccinations. Primary Health Networks (PHNs) will

also be supported with \$7.9 million, to deploy medical deputising services, nurse practitioners and practice nurses to conduct home visits to COVID-19 positive patients in RACFs.

Australians living in rural and remote communities face particular health challenges, in comparison with their urban counterparts. Many of these communities are dependent on nurse-led services, as nurses account for the largest group of health providers in the rural and remote workforce. Support for nursing, allied health and medical training has been provided in this budget, with \$36.2 million to establish two new University Departments of Rural Health (UDRH) in the South West and Goldfields regions of Western Australia.

Fires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years have presented significant challenges to the nursing and midwifery workforce, and it is important now more than ever to reach out and support each other. In the 2022-23 Budget, the Government is providing \$2.2 million to further support the mental health of the health workforce, through the Hand-n-Hand program to provide peer support to the healthcare sector, and the extension of the Black Dog Institute's The Essential Network (TEN) for Health Professionals. I encourage you to check in with your health care worker friends and colleagues and connect with these services when needed.

As this newsletter is focussed on the outcome of the Budget, I will send out another newsletter in April to update you on the ongoing nursing and midwifery work underway in the Department.

Thank you

Professor (Practice) Alison J McMillan PSM

Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer

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