

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 Ngunawal Country in Canberra. This year has once again demanded our enduring resilience as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to evolve and challenge us all. I acknowledge the significant burden COVID-19 continues to have on nurses and midwives, in our professional roles and all the other important roles we take responsibility for in our private lives. It is with enormous gratitude that I reflect on your contribution and dedication providing exceptional care during what was a challenging and relentless year. I am extremely proud of both the nursing and midwifery professions that have demonstrated enormous courage, strength, and commitment to providing quality health care to the Australian community whilst living with the complexities of COVID-19.

My team and I spent much of the year providing advice to our nursing and midwifery stakeholders, the Australian community and all levels of Government in relation to the evolving COVID-19 landscape and other nursing and midwifery issues.

Since the release of the August Newsletter, the Department has continued to work on the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out. An amazing 88.5% of Australians over the age of 16 years are now fully vaccinated. This would not have been possible without the ongoing support of nurses and midwives encouraging and delivering timely vaccinations. I encourage you to keep up to date on all the latest COVID-19 pandemic information via the following links:

- [COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- [Compulsory accredited training for the COVID-19 vaccination workforce](#)
- [ATAGI recommendations on the use of a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [ATAGI shared decision-making guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy](#)
- Boosters can be booked through the [Vaccine Clinic Finder](#)
- [AHPRA Pandemic response sub-registers](#)

In addition, the Australian College of Midwives has launched an online COVID-19 Information for Midwives repository to equip midwives and pregnant women with the latest information about COVID-19 vaccinations. It includes resources, videos, online courses and more. For more information, see: [COVID-19 Information for Midwives](#).

In other Midwifery news, I am pleased to report the extension to 31 December 2023 of the exemption in the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act (2009) for privately practising midwives to hold professional indemnity insurance for homebirth services. This extension allows privately practising midwives to continue to provide homebirth services under their current insurance arrangements. It also allows the Commonwealth to continue to work with stakeholders towards finding a permanent solution to the exemption for professional indemnity insurance for privately practising midwives.

I am leading the development of the first National Nursing Strategy (the Strategy), that will fully realise the value of nurses, and the need to ensure that a highly qualified and skilled workforce is supported in Australia. The Strategy will articulate a vision for nursing and set out a framework to facilitate collaboration and action between all stakeholders, government and non-government, on future nursing workforce planning and policy reform. Consultation on the Strategy will begin shortly, and I look forward to engaging with you in this process.

Other strategic nursing policy initiatives will be nested in the Strategy including the development of the Nurse Practitioner 10 Year Plan (the Plan) and monitoring the realisation of the Educating the Nurse of the Future (ENOF) report recommendations.

The first round of public consultation of the Plan is **now open** on the Department of Health's [Consultation Hub](#). The consultation process is intended to guide and shape the development of the Plan. Your input will help us better understand what is important to you when considering the role of nurse practitioners in Australia and what you'd like to see incorporated in the 10-year plan. I encourage you to engage with this consultation and share this widely amongst your networks.

The Government response to the ENOF was tabled in Parliament on 30 September 2021. It supports the recommendation that the National Nursing and Midwifery Education Advisory Network, that I Chair, be given responsibility for monitoring implementation of the recommendations. This important work will ensure our future nurses are adequately equipped to meet the needs of Australia's future health system. The ENOF recommendations will also be considered in the development of the Strategy. You can access the ENOF collection of reports on the [Department's website](#).

I also Chair the National Stillbirth Implementation Oversight Group that oversees the implementation of the *National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan* (the Plan). The Government is investing \$21.3 million to implement activities under the Plan. One of the key initiatives under the Plan is the cultural adaptation of the Safer Baby Bundle to support health professionals to raise the issue of stillbirth with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to assist them to reduce their risk of stillbirth. Free online training can be accessed via the Stillbirth CRE [website](#). Other activities being implemented under the Plan include:

- developing a clinical care standard to support health professionals to provide optimal, evidence-based care to prevent stillbirth and support families experiencing stillbirth. Further information can be accessed via the [Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare website](#)
- updating the [Clinical Practice Guideline for Care Clinical Practice Guidelines for Care Around Stillbirth and Neonatal Death](#)
- updating the stillbirth related content of the [Clinical Practice Guidelines - Pregnancy Care](#)

I wish you and your loved ones all a happy and healthy holiday's and 2022. Please take care of yourselves and look out for others, particularly over the holiday period.

Thank you again for all the work you do to keep Australians safe and well.

Alison

Other news

Participating Midwives Implementation Liaison Group

The Department convened a Participating Midwives Implementation Liaison Group (PMILG) to support the successful implementation of proposed changes to Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items for participating midwives. The proposed changes are a result of the MBS Review Taskforce process. The PMILG provided valuable advice and assisted the department to minimise any unintended consequences resulting from these changes. The final meeting of the PMILG was held on 4 November 2021.

Mental Health Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship Program

The Department recently announced \$5.15 million for the Mental Health Nursing and Allied Health Scholarship Program (the Program) to support mental health nurses and allied health professionals to enter the mental health

Continuation of the evidence-based guidelines for the clinical care of patients with COVID-19

The Department has extended its funding to continue work on evidence-based guidelines to support clinicians in the clinical care of patients with COVID-19. For more information, see: [National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce](#)

COVID-19 vaccination for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommends COVID-19 vaccination for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy, see: [shared decision making guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy](#).

workforce and upskill existing health practitioners in the mental health sector. This program will provide up to 126 postgraduate nursing scholarships for courses related to mental health and suicide prevention. For more information and to register your interest, visit the Australian College of Nursing's [website](#).

Aged Care Nursing

To recognise the extraordinary efforts of our aged care nurses, particularly through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has announced a payment for registered nurses who work for the same aged care provider for 12 months. Further information on this initiative can be found on the Department's [website](#).

It is exciting to see 153 newly graduated nurses have commenced the Commonwealth's Aged Care Transition to Practice Program. Further information on the Aged Care Transition to Practice Program can be found on the Department's [website](#).

I also encourage you to engage with us on the aged care reforms. To participate and help build an aged care system for the future please visit the [Ageing and Aged Care Engagement Hub](#).

COVID-19 advice for the health and disability sector

For up-to-date information and advice on COVID-19 for the health and disability sector, see: [COVID-19 advice for the health and disability sector](#).

Grief and Trauma Support for Aged Care

The Australian Government is delivering a [Aged Care COVID-19 grief and trauma response package](#) to help those impacted by COVID-19 across the aged care sector. This includes aged care recipients, their loved ones and aged care staff. Free resources are available for download via the resources page.

Questions regarding grief and trauma support for aged care can be directed to: ageing.and.diversity@health.gov.au

Mental Health and Wellbeing

For information about how to take care of yourself and your colleagues' mental health and wellbeing during this challenging time, see: [Mental health for the health workforce during COVID-19](#).

Upcoming conferences

Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Conference Roadshow

February 2022 | Hobart, Gold Coast, Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Fremantle, Cairns, Darwin

Register your interest: [APNA Conference Roadshow](#)

11th Annual Australian Healthcare Week

16-17 March 2022 | Sydney

The theme for the summit is *'Improving Service Quality, Accessibility and Experience Through Technology, New Care Models and Workforce Transformation'*.

Register your interest: [Australian Healthcare Week 2022](#)

NSW State Conference 2022

18-19 March 2022 | Orange

The title of the conference is *'From the Ground Up'*.

Register your interest: [NSW State Conference 2022](#)

Mailbox

The CNMO Newsletter is now available on the Department of Health website. If you are interested to receive your own copy [subscribe to our newsletter](#).

If you have any feedback or would like to contact the CNMO team, please email the CNMO inbox - cnmo@health.gov.au.

Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (CDNM) Symposium

29-30 March 2022 | Sunshine Coast

The theme of this symposium is *'Future-proofing the profession: a think tank for nursing and midwifery'*.

Register your interest: [CDNM symposium 2022](#)

46th International Mental Health Nursing Conference 2022

4-6 May 2022 | Gold Coast

The theme of this conference is *'Mental Health Nursing in a Climate of Change'*.

Register your interest: [46th International Mental Health Nursing Conference 2022](#)