



25 July 2025

Via email: ReformRoundtable@treasury.gov.au

RE: Economic Reform Roundtable – Delivering quality care more efficiently

To the Economic Reform Roundtable,

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) is Australia's largest national union and professional nursing and midwifery organisation. In collaboration with the ANMF's eight state and territory branches, we represent the professional, industrial and political interests of more than 345,000 nurses, midwives and care-workers across the country. Economic reform is necessary to ensure future workforce productivity, economic resilience, and budget sustainability. The care economy, encompassing paid and unpaid work in health, aged, and disability care, personal care, and education, forms the bedrock of a thriving and equitable society. The ANMF recommend the following reforms to support improved productivity.

1. **Address the pipeline of new workers and support ongoing skills development** through investment in high quality, accessible, and affordable education and training including secondary and tertiary education and continuing professional development including for core skills and competencies and cutting-edge technologies and data systems.
 - a. Establish minimum intake numbers for higher education degrees for nursing and midwifery and abolish tertiary education fees for students studying nursing, midwifery, and vocational education and training courses to become care workers (however titled) contingent on remaining within the profession/s for a set number of years.
 - b. Establish a nationally consistent approach to transition to practice and national professional development and career framework for nurses and midwives including rolling out nationally consistent registered undergraduate student of nursing and midwifery (RUSON/M) employment programs.
2. **Sustain and support the existing and future workforce with investment in workforce retention strategies** including better gender-equal pay, better working conditions and safety, flexible rostering and leave, permanent positions, workforce health, wellbeing, and support, and staff performance and career development.
 - a. Provide sustainable permanent funding for the Nurse and Midwife Health Program Australia to implement preventative wellbeing measures for healthcare workers to help mitigate the known psychosocial risks associated with the professions.
 - b. Establish and sustain incentive-based programs and workforce practices to improve recruitment and retention of nurses, midwives, and care workers including i) return to practice schemes for workers who have left the professions or industry and ii) efficient and ethical recruitment of internationally qualified nurses and midwives.
 - c. Legislate national minimum nurse and midwife ratios that are consistent across all shifts in public and private clinical settings.
3. **Support population-level health and wellbeing and reduce over-reliance on emergency services, the secondary and tertiary health sector** through investment in evidence-based public health, preventive health, and primary healthcare and workforce.
 - a. Provide fully funded, unlimited mental healthcare under Medicare and establish a mental health nurse program without credentialling requirements.
 - b. Review Federal Government health funding arrangements to ensure transparency, accountability and effective use of the health budget and to allow States and

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ANMF Journals

Australian Nursing and
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- Territories to better access and utilise resources, eliminating the current disconnect between state and federally funded services such as acute care, primary care and aged care, resulting in improvements in patient flow and chronic disease management across the health sector.
- c. Fund and implement a primary healthcare workforce development strategy to provide 15,000 extra education and training places for registered nurses, nurse practitioners and midwives in areas of poorer healthcare access.
 4. **Enable staff to work to their full potential in effective teams and roles** by investing in addressing barriers to staff working to their full scope of practice as well as implementation and adoption of models of care that utilise staff's full scope of practice effectively with clear job roles, delegation frameworks, and supervision.
 - a. Provide sustainable funding for the implementation, evaluation, and scale-up of evidence-based nurse and midwife-led models of care including registered nurse prescribing and community-based primary care.
 - b. Enable nurse practitioners and endorsed midwives to directly refer patients to specialists to reduce waiting times for care. Increase the Workforce Incentive Payment Practice Stream to cover up to seven healthcare professionals, and tie payments to higher scope clinical care.
 - c. Authorise nurse practitioners, endorsed midwives and qualified registered nurses to order diagnostic tests such as mammograms, X-rays and bone density (DEXA) scans. For endorsed midwives, this includes tests such as non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT), pelvic ultrasound, multiple pregnancy items and iron studies.
 5. **Support effective and efficient regulation that maintains safety for consumers and staff** by enhancing and streamlining health practitioner regulation through investment in reforms that improve transparency, efficiency, flexibility, and consistency for registrants and alignment of health practitioner regulation with other health sector regulation.
 - a. Establish a national registration and regulation system for care workers (however titled) operated by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.
 - b. Introduce 'safe harbour' laws to provide a level of legislated protection to healthcare workers providing care in circumstances whereby employers have failed to address areas of risk to patient/staff safety.
 - c. Implement reforms necessary to reduce duplication, bureaucracy, inflexibility, and poor intersectoral collaboration in Australia's National Registration and Accreditation Scheme including a single national employment check.
 6. **Develop, grow, network, and utilise research, data, and technology** through investing in new and existing high-quality digital technologies, research, evaluation, and implementation strategies, and technological innovations for closing the research and practice gap, collecting and leveraging workforce insights, and enhancing investigation, uptake, and utilisation of data and research.
 7. **Support workers by investing in paid and unpaid care work and addressing wider issues that impact productivity and efficiency** through building and sustaining access to high-quality, lifelong care services, reducing reliance on unpaid care work, and addressing access to affordable housing, social services, safe, healthy food and community spaces.

Yours sincerely

Annie Butler

Authorised officer: Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) – Federal Office

Role: Federal Secretary