



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday May 12

Patients and the community are the big winners in ground breaking health reform budget

Australians will be healthier and have greater access to equitable, quality health care because of changes announced in the Federal Budget, the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) said today.

“Allowing rebates for prescriptions, referrals and diagnostic tests ordered by nurse practitioners and midwives across Australia will break down the barriers that prevent Australians accessing equitable health care,” ANF federal secretary Ged Kearney said. “This initiative will keep people well, in the community and ultimately reduce pressure on public hospitals.”

“These changes will boost frontline healthcare across the community and make sure that those people who receive health care from nurse practitioners and midwives can do so without facing huge out of pocket expenses.”

The ANF applauded these and other Budget initiatives saying that the Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon had consistently shown that she understands the true value of nursing care and the advanced skills of highly qualified nurses and midwives.

“This represents a new era of health care and is a landmark reform of our health and hospital system,” Ms Kearney said.

Under the reforms outlined by Minister for Health Nicola Roxon:

1. Medicines prescribed by nurse practitioners and eligible midwives will come under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule;
2. Diagnostics tests and referrals ordered by nurse practitioners and eligible midwives will attract rebates under the Medical Benefits Scheme; and
3. There will be a Government supported professional indemnity insurance scheme for eligible midwives.

Aged Care

While we recognise that there is still a lot to be done for aged care and particularly those nurses and carers working in aged care, we can see a commitment to reform that is encouraging and we will continue to pursue the objectives of our **Because We Care** campaign, calling for major reform in the sector.

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ANF Journals

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Ms Kearney said the ANF's current national **Because We Care** campaign is calling for:

1. The right balance of skills and nursing hours so that nursing and care staff can provide quality care for every resident.
2. Fair pay for aged care nurses and care staff who are paid up to \$300 per week less than nurses in other sectors.
3. Recognition of the professional skills of Assistants in Nursing and care staff through a national licensing system.
4. A guarantee that taxpayer funding is used for nursing and personal care for each resident.

"We are in desperate need of nursing staff with the right mix of nursing skills in aged care," Ms Kearney explained.

"The ANF looks forward to working with the Federal Government for increased funding and reform for the aged care sector in the future," Ms Kearney said.

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The ANF, with 170,000 members, is the professional and industrial voice for nurses and midwives in Australia.

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