



24 March 2022

Workforce Analysis Team
National Skills Commission
Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Email: SkillsPriorityList@skillscommission.gov.au

Dear Team,

ANMF response to the National Skills Commission (NSC) Skills Priority List (SPL) Stakeholder Survey

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the National Skills Commission Skills Priority List (SPL) survey.

We seek to provide our response directly rather than through the on-line survey link, as we have done in previous consultations.

The 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 310,000 nurses, midwives and carers across the country.

Our members work in the public and private health, aged care and disability sectors across a wide variety of urban, rural and remote locations. We work with them to improve their ability to deliver safe and best practice care in each and every one of these settings, fulfil their professional goals and achieve a healthy work/life balance.

Please note our response covers the ANZSCO occupations listed below indicating the respective labour market and future demand rating current at June 2021.

Occupations in national shortage, with strong future demand:

411411 - Enrolled Nurses
423111 - Aged or Disabled Carer

Occupations in national shortage, with moderate future demand:

254111 - Midwife
423312 - Nursing Support Worker
423313 - Personal Care Assistant

Melbourne Office

Level 1, 365 Queen Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Australia

T +61 3 9602 8500

F +61 3 9602 8567

E anmffederal@anmf.org.au

W www.anmf.org.au

ANMF Journals

Australian Nursing and
Midwifery Journal (ANMJ)

E anmjadmin@anmf.org.au

W www.anmj.org.au

Australian Journal of
Advanced Nursing (AJAN)

E ajan@anmf.org.au

W www.ajan.com.au

ABN 41 816 898 298



Occupations not in national shortage, with moderate future demand:

- 254412 - Registered Nurse (Aged Care)
- 254413 - Registered Nurse (Child and Family Health)
- 254414 - Registered Nurse (Community Health)
- 254415 - Registered Nurse (Critical Care)
- 254416 - Registered Nurse (Developmental Disability)
- 254417 - Registered Nurse (Disability and Rehabilitation)
- 254418 - Registered Nurse (Medical)
- 254421 - Registered Nurse (Medical Practice)
- 254422 - Registered Nurse (Mental Health)
- 254423 - Registered Nurse (Perioperative)
- 254424 - Registered Nurse (Surgical)
- 254425 - Registered Nurse (Paediatrics)

It would be an understatement to say that the past two years of the Covid-19 pandemic have put enormous pressure on the health and aged care workforce as a whole, and nursing, midwifery and care workers in particular. An already overworked workforce has been stretched to the limit over an extended period of time without any relief. The nursing, midwifery and carer workforce is still heavily impacted by on-going high levels of infection in the community and hospitalisations. This is compounded by the high numbers of staff unable to work because they are unwell or are required to isolate.

There is an immediate need to provide additional staffing across the board, not only to provide the necessary level of care to the public but to enable health and aged care workers to work normal shift hours without being rostered on double shifts or doing many hours of overtime every day of every week. Our members also need an opportunity to take leave to recover and enable them to remain in the workforce. The retention of existing staff to prevent the sector losing skilled and experience workers should be a priority.

In the current circumstances, it is difficult to provide a clear view of whether the current ratings listed against the various nursing, midwifery and carer occupations should be changed. There are immediate shortages across a range of areas however, we suggest the following factors be considered and taken into account in assessing the current ratings:

- The number of nursing and midwifery students expected to graduate in the next few years. Based on the latest data available, over 30,000 students commenced a course for initial registration as a nurse in 2020. In 2020, there were a total of 78,281 students enrolled and in 2020 17,370 completed courses.
- Enrolled Nurse data for 2020 shows there were 12,010 commencements and 6,190 completions that year.



Aged care sector

Attraction and retention problems in the aged care sector are not new, however the pandemic has amplified the problems to a new level due to the following factors:

- Persistent low wages in the sector with employers offering very low wage outcomes in enterprise bargaining;
- Insecure hours, low hours contracts, lack of regular hours of work and significant underemployment in the sector;
- The predominance of part time and casual work in the aged care sector and underemployment with people working multiple jobs to earn enough to earn a decent living;
- A lack of willingness on the part of employers and the Federal Government to address problems with staffing levels and skill mix;
- Poor retention of staff due to the above.

The Commonwealth Government has committed \$338.5 million over three years to grow, train and upskill the aged care workforce.¹ These funds will go towards various programs including:

- Home Care Workforce Support Program
- Expansion of available places in Aged Care Transition to Practice Program and Aged Care Nursing Scholarship Program
- An additional 33,800 training places for personal care workers
- Training in dementia care and palliative care.

However unless the fundamental problems are dealt with people will not remain in the sector, thereby undermining the purpose of these programs. These programs will only be effective if suitable candidates with the appropriate training and skills are attracted to and retained in the aged care workforce.

COVID-19 impact

The ANMF considers that at least in the short term, if not for the entirety of the next five year period, changes associated with the response to the COVID-19 pandemic must also be considered.

Other factors to take into account:

- Reduction in the number of COVID-19 testing sites and reduced staffing in this area may increase the supply of nurses and midwives.
- Closure and reduction of vaccination hubs may increase the supply of nurses back into the health and aged care workforce.

¹ [45 - Workforce - Growing a skilled and high quality workforce to care for senior Australians - Budget 2021-22 fact sheet \(health.gov.au\)](#)



- Between November 2021 and 30 January 2022, 56,000 international students arrived in Australia.² However, the ABS reports that for January 2022, arrivals of international students are still nearly 70% lower than pre-COVID levels in January 2019.³ The return of international students and opening of international borders will have some positive impact on supply of workers in personal care worker or assistant in nursing roles.
- The global shortage of nurses and midwives and the ethical issues associated with high income countries recruiting from lower income countries must be considered, particularly in light of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional feedback concerning occupations not well described in ANZSCO

We raise for your consideration issues relating to the occupations covering Nursing Support and Personal Care Workers. The occupations listed in this Group include:

- 423312 Nursing Support Worker (Alternative titles – Assistant in Nursing)
- 423313 Personal Care Assistant
- 423111 Aged or Disabled Carer (Alternative titles – Aged or Disabled Care Worker; Personal Carer and Personal Care Worker)

All occupations listed above are common titles used for different types of care work carried out in a range of work settings and services across aged and disability services including nursing homes, aged home care and disability care provided in the home. The titles are also used interchangeably both within and across different work settings. The work performed will vary but there is some degree of overlap between the “tasks” described under the respective ANZSCO descriptors.

In light of the current and increasing demand for workers in these occupations, it would be helpful from a workforce planning perspective to be able to distinguish between care workers working in aged care (residential and home care) and care workers providing care in disability services.

To date, the workforce data available from the ABS cannot provide information on the number of Aged or Disabled Carers working in aged care as distinct from disability care. Similarly, it is not possible to identify the number of care workers, (however described), who are home care workers.

The industry classifications (ANZSIC), provide access to information on the number of people in each occupation working in “Aged Care Residential Services” but there is no industry classification specifically capturing aged care in the home, community care or disability services.

² [Tens of thousands of international students return to Australia - ICEF Monitor - Market intelligence for international student recruitment](#)

³ [Overseas Arrivals and Departures, Australia, January 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)



The ability to access workforce data is fundamental to workforce planning and we are concerned the data in relation to the above occupations cannot be easily identified. While we do not necessarily have a perfect solution, one suggestion is that the “Aged or Disabled Carer” classification be changed to just “Disabled Carer” to distinguish the occupation from aged care.

Yours Sincerely,

Annie Butler
Federal Secretary