ANMF COVID-19 RESPONSE GUIDELINE #1

ANMF Priorities for Nursing Workforce Surge Strategies and Principles for Redeployment of Registered Nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia

ALERT The situation regarding COVID-19 is continually evolving. This response guideline outlines key issues and recommendations as at 24 April 2020. The statement will be updated regularly to reflect issues and strategies from nursing in response to emerging evidence.

BACKGROUND

Health emergencies put health systems and their ability to deliver health and social care services under strain. Currently, health care services around the globe, including in Australia, are being confronted with increased demand generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Registered nurses have a critical role to play in the response to the current emergency.

Registered nurses are integral to the effective operation of the Australian health and aged care systems. During infectious disease outbreaks such as COVID-19, they are at the frontline of response efforts and are at the front line of identifying, managing, and treating patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection as well as dealing with ongoing and everyday healthcare activities.

In accordance with World Health Organization recommendations[1], an effective COVID-19 response by health systems requires transparent decisions, based on the best available evidence about which health and social care services are essential and which may be postponed, deferred or delivered through different modalities to free up resources:

1. That can be used for the COVID-19 response; and
2. To ensure essential services continue to be safely delivered during the COVID-19 outbreak.

In Australia, this involves the implementation of a series of nursing workforce surge strategies, which may include redeployment of registered nurses from their usual area of work or workplace to a different area of work or workplace.

Ensuring security, safety and support for all registered nurses to enable them to provide the best care for the whole community during the time of the COVID-19 health crisis must be the top priority of governments and employers. This includes personal, professional, occupational and financial security and safety.

This guideline sets out the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation's (ANMF's) priorities for nursing workforce surge strategies and principles for redeployment of registered nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia.

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[1] World Health Organization. Strengthening the Health Systems Response to COVID-19 Technical guidance #1 Maintaining continuity of essential health care services while mobilizing the health workforce for COVID-19 response (1 April 2020) Available at: http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/436354/strengthening-health-systems-response-COVID-19-technical-guidance-1.pdf?ua=1 (Accessed 14 April 2020)

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ANMF PRIORITIES FOR NURSING WORKFORCE SURGE STRATEGIES

** All strategies employed to surge the nursing workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic must guarantee that the **right staff, with the right skills are in the right place at the right time to ensure that every individual receives the right care**.*

1. Retain the currently employed registered nurse workforce across all sectors and increase workforce capacity by increasing the hours of part-time, casual and temporary staff.

2. Increase the skills of currently employed registered nurses as appropriate to assist with nursing care delivery in critical care.

3. Recruit registered nurses, who have recently left the workforce, supported by appropriate regulatory arrangements and refresher training/upskilling, to return to work in an area commensurate with their skills and scope of practice.

4. Increase and fast-track, as appropriate, employment of newly graduated registered nurses.

5. Where appropriate, employ second and third year undergraduate nursing students in accordance with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (NMBA) framework for employment of students in approved programs of study.[2]

6. Increase the hours of work for international students of NMBA approved bachelor of nursing programs.

ANMF PRINCIPLES FOR REDEPLOYMENT OF REGISTERED NURSES

** All strategies employed to surge the nursing workforce, including redeployment, during the COVID-19 pandemic must guarantee that **the right staff, with the right skills are in the right place at the right time to ensure that every individual receives the right care.***

All RNs being deployed must be authorised, competent and confident and educated to practice.

a. Ensure the health, safety and protection of all registered nurses in frontline health and aged care services delivery.

b. Ensure registered nurses, across all sectors, are provided with evidence based COVID-19 training.

c. Initiate rapid training mechanisms and necessary supports for key capacities and preparation for redeployment, including diagnosis, triage, clinical management, essential infection prevention and control, and other skills as required.

d. Address industrial and related issues to enable rapid response and assist redeployment, including allocation of financial resources to ensure timely payment of salaries, paid sick and pandemic (quarantine) leave and other entitlements.

e. Ensure physical, emotional and legal protections are in place for registered nurses redeployed to an area different from their usual area of practice and are supported by appropriate education, training, mentorship and supervision.

f. Identify domestic support measures (e.g. travel, accommodation, childcare, care of ill or disabled family members) that could enhance registered nurse flexibility for redeployment.

g. Address work, health and safety concerns relating to COVID-19.

h. Reassign registered nurses in high risk categories for COVID-19 complications to settings and/or duties that significantly reduce the risk of exposure.

i. Establish communication platforms that ensure the registered nurse workforce is regularly and frequently informed of changes in health service demands, service delivery arrangements, training opportunities etc.

j. Provide mental health and psychosocial supports for registered nurses employed and redeployed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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[2] Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. COVID-19 Employment of students enrolled in NMBA-approved nursing programs of study [Internet]. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. Canberra, Australia. Updated 31 Mar 2020. Available at: https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/COVID19-guidance.aspx (Accessed 14 Apr 2020).

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