

Submission No: 28

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The Secretary  
Standing Committee for Science and Innovation  
Inquiry into research training and research workforce issues in Australian universities  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Standing Committee,

I write as the Chair of the Coalition of National Nursing Organisations, a coalition of over 50 national nursing organisations representing nurses working in all areas of practice. Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry.

Research is an important issue for the nursing profession and one of considerable strategic interest to our coalition. The CoNNO Position Paper on Nursing Research and accompanying Background Paper form part of this submission and are attached for your information.

As an area of scholarship, nursing research in Australia has a relatively brief history. Following the establishment of university schools of nursing in the 1980's in Australia, nursing has entered the arena of academic and clinical research with enthusiasm and vigour, however nursing research has struggled to gain the profile and funding of the other more established health disciplines.

Despite a national review that considered these issues, equity in terms of access to research dollars and proportional publishing for nursing research in high impact journals is yet to be achieved.

Research in nursing is vital for ensuring optimum patient care and evidence based practice. As professionals in a unique discipline, nurses need to be able to engage in research to further their understanding of nursing practice and its contribution to improving patient outcomes.

CoNNO is concerned that nurses do not have access to a level of research funding that is proportional to the profession's size relative to other health professions, and to nurses' significant contribution to positive patient outcomes; and that the qualitative research that many nurses choose is less likely to achieve success in obtaining funding.

A strong emphasis on practice in nursing affects the capacity of the profession to recruit research nurses early in their career. Building research capacity requires a combination of academic leadership and effective management to ensure that an appreciation of the possibilities and necessity for research is integral to the education of nurses. University departments of nursing should view nursing research as a core organisational activity, as well as an individual pursuit requiring support. It is crucial to ensure that the connections between teaching and research are strong.

Universities and professional nursing organisations are seeking effective ways of linking together nursing researchers with differing levels of experience, particularly early career researchers and nursing academic leaders.

To improve the evidence base for practice, nursing research needs the involvement of the whole profession with research development and dissemination. In addition to building nursing research capacity and capability it is necessary to ensure that this is sustained. A national database for nursing research would assist with capacity building, linkages and identifying the gaps.

The importance of nursing research was recognised by the National Review of Nursing Education, commissioned by the Australian Government in 2001 to examine the future nursing educational needs of the health, community and aged care systems and to advise on appropriate education policy and funding frameworks.

The 2002 report from this review, *Our Duty of Care*, highlighted the importance of nursing research and the development of nursing researchers for sound health policy decision-making and improvements in clinical nursing practice and education. It identified building nursing research capacity and facilitating the application of that research as vital for more efficient, effective health outcomes from nursing work and to the delivery of quality education to nurses.

Recommendation 8 of this report called for dedicated funding from new or existing sources to provide nursing research grants, as well as the establishment of nursing research centres to build longer term capacity and integration of research findings into practice.

The taskforce set up to implement the recommendations of this report identified four priorities for nursing research in Australia: contributing to research on national health priority areas; developing a research critical mass; growing generations of researchers; and translating research into practice.

Boosting the capacity of nursing researchers in Australia has the potential to significantly improve patient outcomes and for Australia to demonstrate leadership in innovative health care practice. Support for nursing research is also required to overcome gaps between evidence and its translation.

Resources and education are required to facilitate the implementation of research, including ways to assist nurses to develop new and innovative ways to implement sound research recommendations to their bedside and community care.

More support from government, research bodies and universities is required for nursing research to address both capacity and evidence translation in order to fulfill this vision.

Yours sincerely,

Kim Ryan  
CoNNO Chair

## Nursing Research Position Statement

This position statement has been prepared jointly by the Coalition of National Nursing Organisations (CoNNO).

CoNNO is a coalition of more than 50 national nursing organisations that represent the nursing profession and its many areas of specialist practice.

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The Coalition of National Nursing Organisations support excellence and innovation in nursing research as a means to advance the knowledge and practice of nursing.

### **It is the position of CoNNO that:**

1. Nursing practice should be evidence based as this contributes to the safety, quality and cost effectiveness of nursing care for individuals, groups and communities using health and/or aged care services;
2. Nursing education, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, should assist in the development of research skills and the ability to integrate research findings into nursing practice.
3. Nursing research should focus on developing knowledge about nursing, and its value and capacity, with the aim of improving practice, which includes the nursing care of persons in health and illness;
4. Nurses in all settings should be able to access nursing and other health care research relevant to their scope of nursing practice;
5. Nurse researchers must abide by the national statement on ethical conduct in research involving humans prepared by the National Health and Medical Research Council;
6. Nurse researchers must adhere to the guidelines on research practice prepared by the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee;
7. Additional scholarships should be made available by government to nursing researchers to support the establishment of a career as an autonomous researcher;
8. Support networks for nurse researchers in both the education and health care settings should be established;
9. Structured support should be made available for early career researchers within universities and clinical settings;
10. Nurse researchers should disseminate their research by publishing in national and international professional journals and presenting at professional forums;
11. Nurse researchers should be acknowledged appropriately in any publications arising from collaborative research projects;
12. Health care facilities should encourage, promote and resource nursing research;
13. Nursing representation should be increased on committees and panels of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Research Council (ARC), or NHMRC or ARC nursing panels established;

14. Research bodies need to expand the quantum of funding available to qualitative research and only use reviewers who have qualitative research expertise to review qualitative research applications;
15. A national society for research in nursing should be established to provide leadership in nursing research and support for nursing researchers;
16. Research bodies should develop programmes of research that encourage researchers to focus on health care teams and multidisciplinary research to inform team practice;
17. The participation of nurses in, and leadership of, research involving multidisciplinary teams should be encouraged.
18. Collaboration between consumers and nurses in developing, conducting and reviewing research should be encouraged.
19. Individual NNO members should consider including support for nursing research in their strategic plans.

*This paper reflects the views of the Coalition of National Nursing Organisations, but not necessarily the full or particular views of all of its member bodies.*

Endorsed December 2007

## Background Paper to CoNNO Position Paper On Nursing Research

### Introduction

The Coalition of National Nursing Organisations (CoNNO) is a coalition of Australian national nursing specialist organisations representing a wide range of specialist groups across the nursing profession. Members of this coalition must have members in four or more states/territories that are either: all enrolled and/or registered nurses; the nursing section of a multidisciplinary group; or a clear network of nurses within such groups who can ensure a nurse representative and feedback to nurses in a practice area.

This coalition, of more than 50 specialist nursing organisations, provides a forum for discussion, consultation, and development of future directions in nursing, and acts as a lobby group at a national level.

There are around 250,000 nurses employed in nursing in Australia. Nurses are a vital part of the Australian health system and make up over 50% of the health workforce.

### Background

As an area of scholarship, nursing research has a relatively brief history. Following the establishment of university schools of nursing in the 1980's in Australia, nursing has entered the arena of academic and clinical research with enthusiasm and vigour, however nursing research has struggled to gain the profile and funding of the other more established health disciplines. Despite a national review that considered these issues, equity in terms of access to research dollars and proportional publishing for nursing research is yet to be achieved.

Research in nursing is vital for ensuring optimum patient care and evidence based practice. As a unique discipline, nurses need to be able to use research to allow them to further their understanding of nursing practice and further their contribution to patient care. Research allows nurses to develop a question about nursing practice, and investigate that question with the aim of improving practice and thus patient outcomes.

The importance of nursing research was recognised by the National Review of Nursing Education, commissioned by the Australian Government in 2001 to examine the future nursing educational needs of the health, community and aged care systems and to advise on appropriate education policy and funding frameworks.

The 2002 report from this review, *Our Duty of Care*,<sup>1</sup> highlighted the importance of nursing research and the development of nursing researchers for sound health policy decision-making and improvements in clinical nursing practice and education. It identified building nursing research capacity and facilitating the application of that research as vital for more efficient, effective health outcomes from nursing work and to the delivery of quality education to nurses.

Recommendation 8 of this report called for dedicated funding from new or existing sources to provide nursing research grants, as well as the establishment of nursing research centres to build longer term capacity and integration of research findings into practice. Responsibility for the implementation of this recommendation was given to the National Nursing and Nursing Education Taskforce (N<sup>3</sup>ET).

In 2005, N<sup>3</sup>ET identified four priorities for nursing research in Australia: contributing to research on national health priority areas; developing a research critical mass; growing generations of researchers; and translating research into practice.<sup>2</sup>

The Taskforce determined strong leadership was needed to drive a national agenda for nursing research and identified the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (CDNM) with its established Research Advisory Group (RAG) as best positioned for this leadership role.

## Coalition of National Nursing Organisations Position on Nursing Research

The Coalition of National Nursing Organisations (CoNNO) has identified the importance of advocating for increased nursing research capacity and has made a commitment to this aim in their 2007 Strategic Plan. The NNOs are concerned that nurses do not have access to a level of research funding that is proportional to the profession's size relative to other health professions; that the qualitative research that many nurses choose is less likely to achieve success in obtaining funding; and research bodies allocating research funds do not always appreciate the significant contribution nursing makes to patient outcomes.

It is vital that nursing practice is evidence based as this contributes to the safety, quality and cost effectiveness of nursing care for individuals, groups and communities using health and/or aged care services. However excellence and innovation in research is necessary to advance the knowledge and practice of nursing. Nurses in all settings should be able to access nursing and other health care research relevant to their scope of nursing practice. Health professionals are increasingly expected to function in a multidisciplinary environment. Future careers in nursing are likely to see a continued emphasis on collaboration and greater recognition of the value and efficacy of care delivered by multidisciplinary teams. Collaborative relationships and practice involving all health professions which is based on multidisciplinary research is necessary to inform team practice.

Building research capacity requires a combination of academic leadership and effective management. University departments of nursing need to view nursing research as a core organisational activity, as well as an individual pursuit requiring support. Linking teaching and research is crucial. Universities and professional nursing organisations need to find effective ways of linking together nursing researchers with differing levels of experience, particularly early career researchers and nursing academic leaders. To improve the evidence base for practice, nursing research needs the involvement of the whole profession with research development and dissemination. In addition to building nursing research capacity and capability it is necessary to ensure that this is sustained. A national database for nursing research would assist with capacity building, linkages and identifying the gaps.

To advance the professions of nursing and midwifery it is necessary to further develop nursing and midwifery science and inform practice through research. Intervention based on evidence, innovation that is evaluated and practice embedded in science will ensure best practice in health care and optimal health outcomes.

This paper reflects the views of the Coalition of National Nursing Organisations, but not necessarily the full or particular views of all of its member bodies.

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