

20 December 2021

Mr Matthew Williams and Adjunct Professor Alison McMillan
Co-Chairs
Nurse Practitioner 10 Year Plan Steering Committee

By email: nursepolicy@Health.gov.au

Dear Mr Williams and Professor McMillan

Nurse Practitioner 10 Year Plan Consultation Paper

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Department of Health on the Nurse Practitioner 10 Year Plan Consultation Paper. The RACGP is Australia's largest professional general practice organisation, representing over 43,000 members working in or toward a specialty career in general practice.

General practice is the foundation of the Australian healthcare system. It is the most efficient and cost-effective part of the health system.^{1,2} Australians see general practitioners (GPs) more than any other health professional. In 2020-21, GPs and their teams provided over 171 million services, with almost nine in ten people consulting a GP.³

General practice can offer the best care to patients when delivered as part of a coordinated, GP-led team that includes nurse practitioners. This approach facilitates:

- continuity of care between patients and their regular GP
- clinical roles, responsibilities and accountabilities within a GP-led general practice team within their defined scope of practice and according to each health professional's level of education, training, supervision and clinical expertise
- genuine links to the patient's general practice to reduce the risk of duplicated services, fragmented care, low value care and wasted valuable health resources.

The Nurse Practitioner 10 Year Plan should reflect a target model of primary care in which all patients have access to GP-led team-based care that meets their health needs. We are concerned that while implementing a model where nurse practitioners practice autonomously may increase patient access in some areas, the role of GPs and nurse practitioners are not interchangeable. Access only to specific services offered by nurse practitioners will not meet the needs of patients with multimorbidity requiring GP-led coordination across a range of providers. Furthermore, there is a risk that the relatively limited nurse practitioner workforce will face the same maldistribution that has occurred in other health professions, causing further challenges with patient access.

The Nurse Practitioner 10 Year Plan is a critical opportunity to set out an equitable, high-quality model of primary care that leverages general practice as the most used part of the health care system, facilitates team-based care and meets the needs of patients.

Please contact Leonie Scott, National Manager – Policy and Advocacy, on (03) 8699 0031 or via leonie.scott@racgp.org.au if you have any questions or comments regarding our feedback.

Yours sincerely



Dr Karen Price
President

References

¹ General Practice Series Number 36, 'General practice activity in Australia 2013-14', Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH) Study, Family Medicine Research Centre University of Sydney, p. iii. 2014.

² Healthy Communities: Frequent GP attenders and their use of health services in 2012-13. National Health Performance Authority. 2015.

³ Australian Department of Health. Annual Medicare Statistics – Financial Year 1984-85 to 2020-21. Canberra: Department of Health, 2021.