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Joint Communique

National health workforce strategic framework

Australian Government, State and Territory Health Ministers today released Australia's first national health workforce strategic framework.

This is a landmark document that will guide national health workforce policy and planning throughout the decade.

The centrepiece of the framework is a direction setting vision for the Australian health workforce and a set of guiding principles for government and all workforce stakeholders to apply to the development of health workforce policy.

The framework outlines a vision for Australia's future health workforce:

Australia will have a sustainable health workforce that is knowledgeable, skilled and adaptable. The workforce will be distributed to achieve equitable health outcomes, suitably trained and competent. The workforce will be valued and able to work within a supportive environment and culture. It will provide safe, quality, preventative, curative and supportive care, that is population and health consumer focussed and capable of meeting the health needs of the Australian community.

The principles highlight key actions as:

- \* Ensuring and sustaining supply;
- \* Workforce distribution that optimises access to health care and meets health needs for all Australians;
- \* Health environments being places in which people want to work;
- \* Ensuring the health workforce is always skilled and competent;
- \* Optimal uses of skills and workforce adaptability
- \* Recognising that health workforce policy and planning must be informed by the best available evidence and linked to the broader health system; and
- \* Recognising that health workforce policy involves all stakeholders working collaboratively with a commitment to the vision, principles and strategies outlined in this framework.

The framework has been written against the backdrop of health workforce shortages; and it identifies demographic change, technology change and empowered consumers as the major influences on the future health workforce. These influences will impact on obtaining, retaining and training the workforce, distribution, service demand, and the need to maintain and update skills.

Leadership, strategic thinking, and management ability will be key skills required of all stakeholders.

It is expected that stakeholders will work with much more cohesion and that actions will be better coordinated across jurisdictions, service settings, professional groups, consumer and carer organisations and the education, training, regulation and industrial sectors to maximise the nation's investment in its health workforce and our ability to improve the health and well being of the Australian community.

Ministers also announced a suite of projects to implement the Strategic Framework, including:

- \* work to identify best practice approaches to recruitment and retention as a resource to help attract and keep the health workforce

- \* work to explore future health workforce challenges, and identify solutions and timeframes for implementation to avoid unmanageable health workforce shortages in the coming decades

- \* the establishment of a Health Workforce Clearinghouse to share information about effective health workforce solutions

- \* health workforce data improvements to ensure policy is based on the best possible information

Ministers agreed that a National Workforce Action Plan, focusing on national and cross-jurisdictional issues, will be developed for reporting back to Ministers at their July meeting.

In addition to national projects, the Australian Government and States and Territories will develop their own implementation plans and responses to the Strategic Framework. Other health workforce stakeholders will also be encouraged to develop implementation plans.

Issued From:

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