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MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

NHHRC final report must recognise benefits of collaborative care models

Royal College of Nursing, Australia (RCNA) welcomed the release of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (NHHRC) final report today, and Chief Executive Officer, Debra Cerasa FRCNA, says she is pleased to see a shift in language in the new report, titled *A Healthier Future For All Australians*.

"We're certainly in basic agreement with the report in calling for a fundamental redesign of the health system, although we will be looking at the finer detail around this statement.

"We're also pleased to see the report has much more of an overt focus on multidisciplinary team-based care. At RCNA we're very supportive of that particular reform direction; we strongly believe that the best, and only, option for the future of health care services in Australia is an option that makes the best possible use of the existing workforce."

The multidisciplinary team approach could also lend a hand in easing access issues for many Australians, if approached in a way that allowed all health professionals to work to the extent of their scope of practice.

"Obviously, spreading health care services across multiple professions has the potential to create greater access opportunities for people in the community," Ms Cerasa said.

"This means using the nursing workforce, using the allied health workforce, accessing the skills and expertise of those health care practitioners who are unable to work to the extent of their scopes of practice under the current system."

However, references in the report to 'better use of specialists in the community' were of concern, Ms Cerasa added. "The report has not included nurse practitioners or any other nursing professional in the definition of 'specialist'.

"We are very much of the opinion that nurse practitioners, with their Masters level qualifications and years of experience, are specialists in their field, and we will certainly be looking for this view to be acknowledged in any future plans for the primary health care system."

RCNA's expert Advisory Council will carefully examine the detail of the Final Report to gauge how effectively the NHHRC has responded to the concerns of the nursing and other sectors of the health care workforce.

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