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MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

Professional nursing body to offer free membership to nursing students

Nursing students across the country are being urged to take up a free offer of membership to the Royal College of Nursing, *Australia* (RCNA), as part of the organisation's strategy to engage with nurses from the beginning of their careers.

Chief Executive Officer, Debra Cerasa FRCNA, says the new generation of nurses has a lot to offer RCNA and we're keen to tap into their energy and invite them to be a part of Australia's peak professional nursing organisation.

"Politically, this is an exciting time to be a member of the peak professional body, as nursing is so well represented and regarded in the current government health reform agenda" she said.

"This is the time to be involved and help influence the future of nursing. Through RCNA involvement, nursing students can network effectively about nursing issues," she said.

Dr Stephanie Fox-Young FRCNA, President of the Board of RCNA says this Nursing Student Complimentary Membership has been recognised by the Board as an important way of investing back into the profession.

"The nursing education sector has been labelled a *national priority area* by the Federal Government. This means we need to ensure the nursing students who are commencing their studies now, are well supported and informed as they commence their nursing journey," she said.

Ms Cerasa says this approach to nurturing our future nurses is reflected in one of the key components of the RCNA's submission to the 2010-11 Federal Budget includes:

Resources be allocated to provide structured, flexible and dedicated mentoring support mechanisms for graduates and early career nurses and midwives across the health system.

"It's through the collective force of all of our members that we're able to inspire, progress and promote the nursing profession and this needs to start with our nursing students," she said.

Alice Mills, Olympic Gold medallist and nursing student at the University of Canberra, who is signing up for the free membership today, says being a part of an organisation like RCNA is being a part of a team.

“As an elite sportsperson, I very much appreciate the team approach to achieving results and being a part of this RCNA team will enhance my future as a nurse, throughout my studies,” she said.

The complimentary RCNA membership extends to:

- first year undergraduate nursing degree students
- second year undergraduate nursing degree students
- first year diploma students

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