

GLOBAL NURSING CAMPAIGN AIMS TO EMPOWER NURSES TO MAXIMISE INFLUENCE

Australia's contribution to a landmark three-year global campaign dubbed *Nursing Now* that is striving to improve health and lift the profile of nursing will focus on pushing for greater access to healthcare.

Nursing Now campaign Board member for the World Health Organization's (WHO) Western Pacific Region, Emeritus Professor Jill White said she had begun canvassing the views of nursing groups across the country, including the ANMF, so Australia could develop a collective strategy to support the movement.

"For me, what underpins universal health coverage is good access," Professor White explained.

"That's what I'll be pushing for Australia to pick up on, that notion of access. Because if you talk to a politician in Australia about universal health coverage, quite reasonably they would say 'We've got Medicare'. And we do and it's a brilliant safety net and we're so lucky to have it but if you talk to someone who is in a rural community, or with a mental health problem, whilst they may have financial coverage they don't have access."

The evolution of **Nursing Now** stems from a global nursing review undertaken by the UK's All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Health that produced a report in 2016 titled *Triple Impact*, which concluded strengthening nursing would spark a threefold effect - improving health, promoting gender equity and supporting economic development.

Backed by the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and World Health Organization (WHO), **Nursing Now** was officially launched last month in London and Geneva and will run until the end of 2020 to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth.

After opening the London event, the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, who boasts a family lineage of nurses, will raise awareness about the global campaign as the UK's official patron.

Fundamentally, **Nursing Now** is aiming to raise the status and profile of nursing so that the profession can work to its full scope and enhance its influence in helping achieve universal health coverage.

The campaign's core goals include achieving greater investment in all aspects



of nursing and midwifery, promoting innovative practice in nursing, boosting the influence of nurses and midwives on global and national health policy, ensuring more nurses step into leadership positions, and providing more evidence to policymakers of the contributions nursing can make.

ANMF A/Federal Secretary Annie Butler encouraged nurses and midwives to sign up and pledge their support to the campaign.

"It's time to take action and raise the profile and status of nursing worldwide," Ms Butler said.

"Nurses should be empowered to use their knowledge, skills and expertise to their full scope. As the health professionals closest to the public, nurses and midwives can play a bigger role in driving better health outcomes."

Professor White said the *Triple Impact* report made valid observations about the lack of knowledge regarding what nursing is and what the profession does.

She also praised its view that developing nurses would further economic development.

"Nursing has so often been seen as a cost rather than an absolute investment in the economic growth of the country and I think that's really significant."

Professor White said **Nursing Now** could forge a powerful voice for the profession but stressed it was critical the end goal of

better patient care and access remains at the forefront.

"What we can't afford to do is get people offside by interpreting this as just about nursing self-interest," she said.

"It's always about better healthcare for people. If we don't have the right number of nurses and we don't have nurses in the right jobs and we don't have nurses paid appropriately and we don't have the right number in the right place, doing the right thing, and educating the right way, we will not have the optimal health for our populations."

Professor White said the success of **Nursing Now** ultimately rested with the professions and their ability to understand the context in which they work, how decisions are made and how they can have greater influence.

"This is up to us. The campaign is about bottom up and top down in lots of ways. It's about trying to educate non-nurses about what nursing can do and garner their assistance and understanding.

"But if nurses don't absolutely take this as a fantastic opportunity to speak about what they do and to try and influence people and think about what might work in their workplace and to agitate about making sure people have a realistic understanding of the job of a nurse - if we don't do our bit we cannot expect others to do anything for us."