

Collaboration, Integration and Reform: Advancing Primary Health Care in Australia

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The Australian government has declared an undertaking to reform primary health care in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009 (a)). This major initiative has been welcomed by health professionals, particularly nurses and midwives, who consider it long overdue. The government has sought to consult with consumers and health professions in redesigning primary health care access and delivery. Indeed, it is very heartening that interdisciplinary forums, discussions and partnerships have been forged, to contribute to the development of a national Primary Health Care Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009 (b)).

Throughout 2009 Royal College of Nursing, *Australia*, the peak professional organisation for nurses in Australia has been actively engaged in the broad range of discussions, working parties and advisory committees which have been established to advance the Government's reform agendas. Royal College of Nursing, *Australia* is focused on playing an effective role in influencing policy development and formation, in relation to primary health care in this current environment of proactive health care reform.

The establishment of Royal College of Nursing, *Australia's* Community and Primary Health Care Faculty in September this year is a clear demonstration of this commitment. The Community and Primary Health Care Faculty has been established to provide authoritative advice on nursing professional issues, as it relates to community and primary health care in Australia. The Faculty, guided by a group of ten professional nursing experts from clinical, management and academic backgrounds, is designed to:

Facilitate the exchange of information and advice on national community and primary health care policy and programs

Promote community and primary health care engagement and partnerships with other key stakeholders, and

Promote community and primary health care research, leadership, education and training (RCNA, 2009).

Royal College of Nursing, *Australia's* vision is to support the many and largely diverse roles of nurses and midwives engaged in primary health care, championing their integration with each other within the nursing profession and their integration with the broader health service framework.

RCNA is fully committed to ensuring that nursing is well represented in the future reforms to primary health care in Australia. Further, the organisation is resolute that nursing's contribution to primary health care is clearly articulated, understood and well-recognised – that is our mission.