

## Contribution of Cancer Nurses to Improve Outcomes for Individuals Impacted by Cancer

Cancer is a major cause of morbidity and mortality in Australia, with an estimated 151,000 new cases diagnosed in 2021, equating to an average of 413 cases per day. (1) It is projected the incidence of cancer will increase by 22% between 2021 and 2031, due to a growing ageing population, expanding national cancer screening programs and improvements in screening and diagnostic technology. Diagnosis at early stage of disease and advances in treatment modalities have led to significant improvements in overall survival for many cancer types, and in those not amendable to cure, longer duration of survival. The ongoing development and increasing complexity of treatments, expanding role of personalised medicine and changes to models of care, reinforce the importance of a skilled multidisciplinary workforce to deliver cancer care.

Cancer nurses deliver complex and multi-faceted interventions across the entire cancer spectrum. These interventions support people affected by cancer including direct care, treatment administration, symptom management, psychological support, nursing and patient education, assessment and monitoring, care management and coordination. (3) The contribution of cancer nurses continues to evolve to meet the needs of those impacted by cancer, and in response to growing complexity in treatment, changes in healthcare delivery, and increasing service user expectations. As advances in cancer treatment and technology have evolved, cancer nurses' skills and expertise have expanded to meet the growing demands and expectations of people affected by cancer.

The influence of cancer nurses on improved outcomes for the individual and their family are widely recognised, with a growing body of research highlighting the contribution of cancer nurses to the provision of optimal cancer care.

**It is the position of the Cancer Nurses Society of Australia (CNSA) that cancer nurses have a positive impact on patient outcomes, including:**

- Improved experience of care through the provision of emotional and psychological support, (4-6)
- Improved knowledge and understanding through support for informational and educational needs, (4, 7-9)
- Improved management of cancer and cancer treatment related symptoms, such as fatigue, constipation, nausea and vomiting, and early recognition of emotional distress, anxiety, depression and mood, (4)
- Improved survival outcomes, quality of life and optimised experiences of care through patient-reported outcomes (PROs), (10)
- Improved experience of service delivery and continuity of care, especially with primary care, (5, 11) and
- Improved ability to participate in self-management. (12)



The positive outcomes reported, associated with the contribution of cancer nurses, are both the result of direct care of patients, their families and carers, and indirect implementation of improvements in healthcare system delivery. (13) To ensure improvements enhance the quality of future cancer care, greater recognition is needed of the contribution of cancer nurses as highly skilled members of the multi-disciplinary care team. Unfortunately, not all patients have access to a cancer nurse, and the education, scope, and recognition of the value of these roles varies significantly across Australia. CNSA reinforces that cancer nurses make a significant contribution to the health of all Australians and better recognition of the current contribution and future potential of cancer nurses is important to ensure the provision of an effective and quality cancer care workforce now and into the future.

### About CNSA

The CNSA is the peak professional organisation representing the largest part of the cancer workforce. CNSA supports and advocates for more than 7,700 nurses across Australia covering the full spectrum of cancer care. This is a diverse workforce, working in a wide variety of settings, including inpatient, outpatient, primary and tertiary care, public, private and community sectors, for people affected by all types of cancer and across the cancer care continuum.

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