

Workforce Summary - Nursing and Midwifery

This edition of Health Works focuses on the rural and remote primary care nursing and midwifery workforce. It provides a state-wide snapshot of nurse/midwife demographics, distribution, and employment settings, along with workforce gaps in Queensland's remote, rural and regional areas. Barriers to primary care nursing/midwifery workforce sustainability are outlined, along with current initiatives to address these barriers.

State-wide Nursing/Midwifery Workforce Snapshot

The nursing/midwifery health workforce data outlined in the following section was gathered through practitioner and practice manager surveys and ongoing practice contact by phone and collated to inform the **2021-2022 Health Workforce Needs Assessment**.

Registration Type

According to the Health Workforce Queensland (HWQ) database, in February 2022, there were 1,725 registered nurses/midwives working in primary care MM2-7 locations in Queensland. The majority of these identified as being a registered nurse (74%) with 22 percent identifying as an enrolled nurse.

The Diabetes Nurse Educator and Nurse Practitioner workforce in remote and rural Queensland is minimal, with a combined total of four percent of the registered nursing/midwifery workforce.

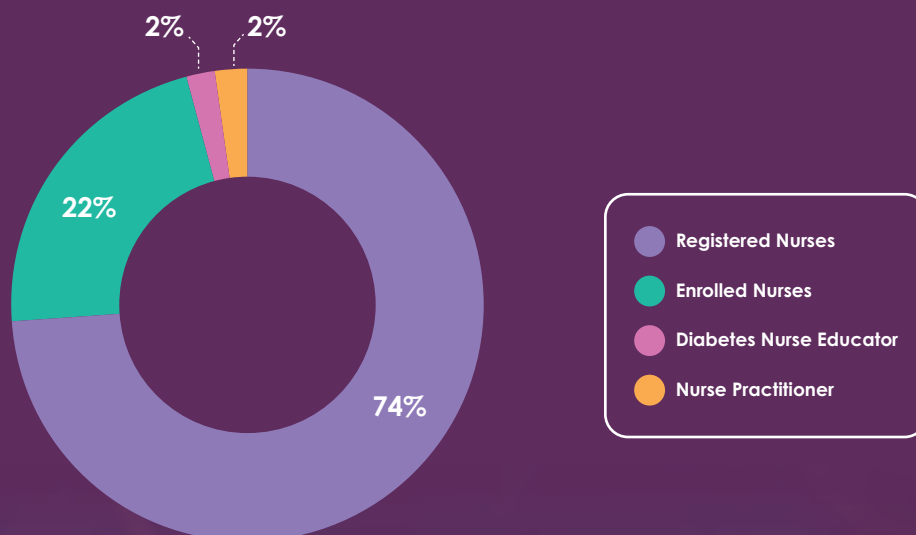


Figure 1: Primary care nursing/midwifery registration type across Queensland MM2-7



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Distribution

The majority of the registered primary care nursing/midwifery workforce, identified through surveys and phone calls as working in remote, rural and regional Queensland, indicated their main place of employment was in a MM2 location (45.3%), followed by MM5 (18.5%) and then MM4 (14.8%).

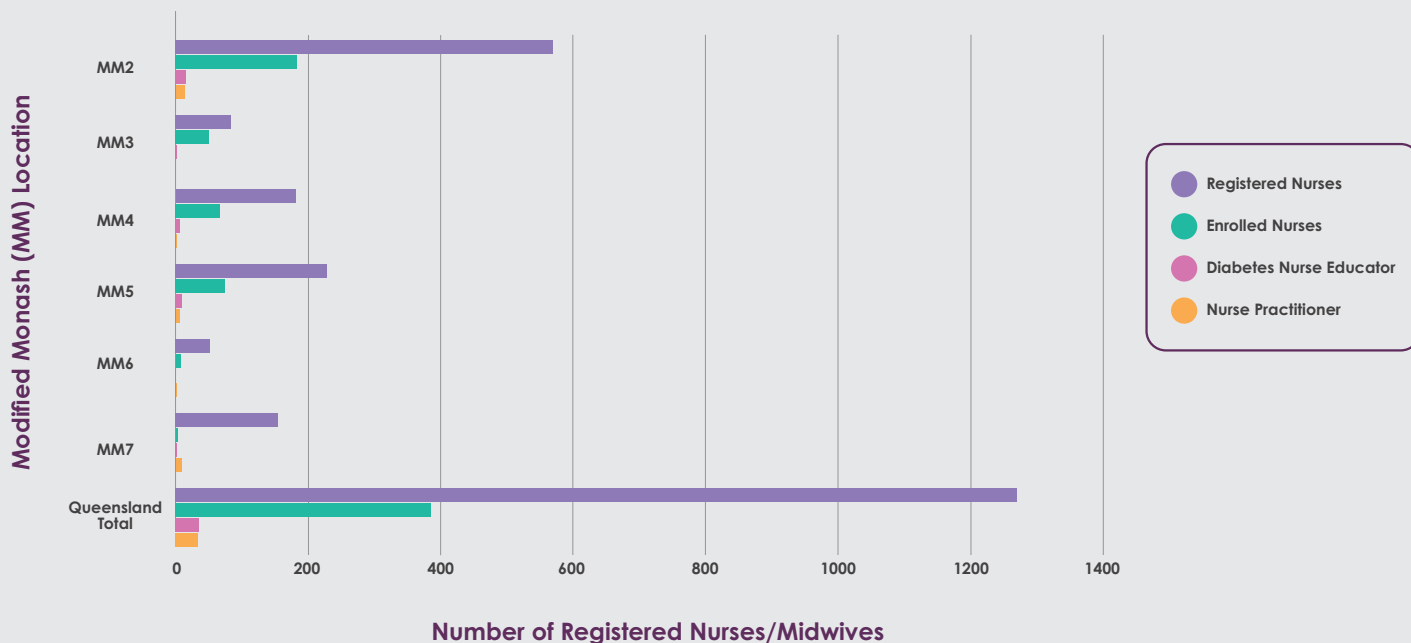


Figure 2: Number of registered nurses/midwives working in primary care by MM location

Employment Setting

Just under 80 percent of the registered nursing/midwifery workforce working in primary care indicated general practice as their main employment setting, followed by a Primary Health Care Centre (14%) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (6%). The breakdown of registered profession and employment settings can be found in Figure 3.

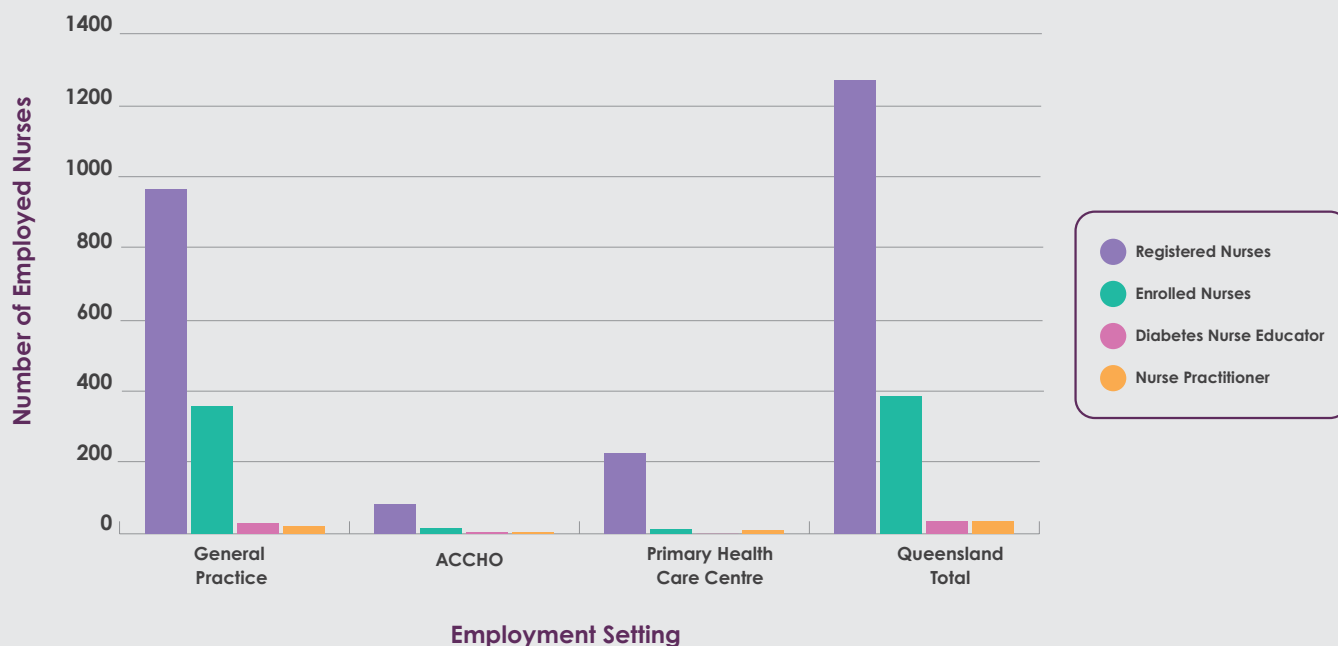


Figure 3: Employment setting of registered nurses/midwives working in primary care across Queensland

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Health Workforce Needs Assessment (HWNA) 2022

The following data was sourced from Health Workforce Queensland's 2022 HWNA survey which gauged participants' beliefs about workforce and primary care service gaps in their community(s) of practise.

The survey was open to GPs, practice managers, primary health care nurses, allied health practitioners, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers/Practitioners. A total of 837 people responded to the survey, the majority being GPs followed by allied health, practice managers and nurses/midwives.

Workforce Gaps

The workforce gap rating mean for nursing/midwifery has risen by over 26 points in the last five years to reach an all-time high of 65.57 in 2022; rating as the sixth highest workforce gap amongst all primary care professions in remote, rural and regional Queensland.

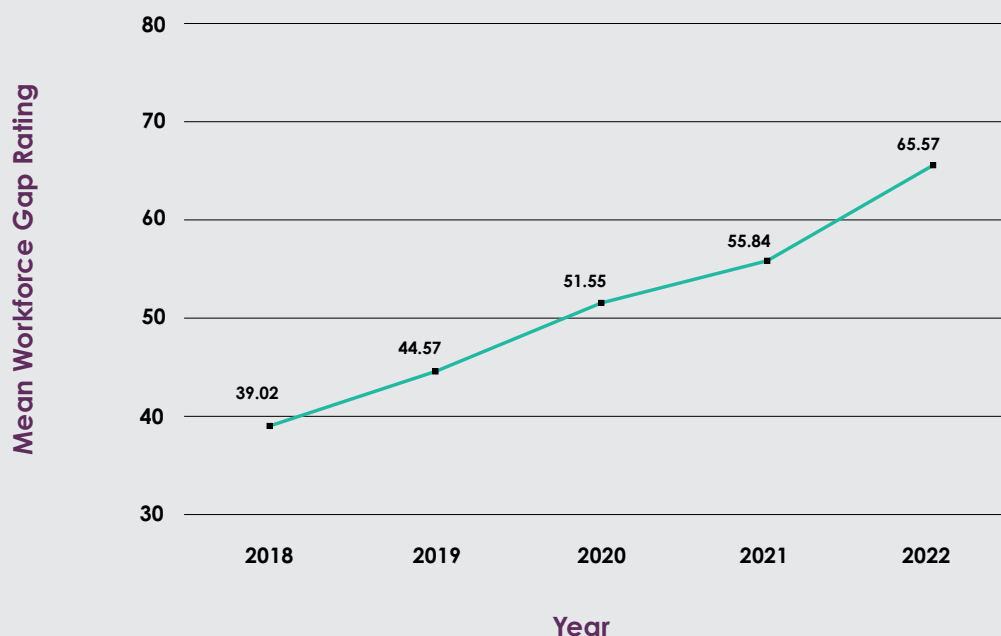


Figure 4: Primary care nursing/Midwifery mean workforce gap ratings 2018-2022

¹ Health Workforce Queensland (2022). 2022 Health Workforce Needs Assessment: Summary of the Primary Care Workforce Needs in Remote and Rural Queensland. Accessed from <https://www.healthworkforce.com.au/workforce-planning-and-project/hwna>



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Barriers to a Sustainable Nursing/Midwifery Workforce

With the majority of registered primary care nurses and midwives employed in a general practice setting, the challenges faced by this workforce is contributing to the lack of sustainability in primary care.

Attracting, recruiting and retaining the primary care nurse workforce is hampered by:

- The absence of a clear pipeline;
- Role restrictions, with nearly 30 percent of nurses reporting not working to their full scope of practice, due in part to the prominent role played in the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. The 2021 APNA Workforce Survey reported Accredited Nurse Immuniser status being at its highest level in history. Concerningly, just 20% of respondents indicated they were performing routine activities such as chronic disease prevention and management²;
- Unsafe work environments combined with a lack of education and training³;
- Significant disparity in pay and conditions between public and private sectors. Respondents of the 2021 APNA Workforce Survey cited poor pay as the number one reason they are planning to leave their current job².

Identifying Potential Solutions

Strategies currently underway to address these barriers include:

- An initiative to waive Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debt for Nurse Practitioners (NPs) who choose to work in MM3-7 locations that commenced January 2022
- The Deputy National Rural Health Commissioner commencing work on the development of a National Rural and Remote Nursing Generalist Framework which will seek to identify core capabilities required for remote and rural nursing practice
- Queensland Health is currently piloting a rural generalist nursing program for early to mid-career registered nurses with the view to expanding their essential skills and training
- The first National Nursing Strategy is being developed and will address workforce sustainability, diversity of the profession and the challenges of remote, rural and regional nursing. This is being developed concurrently with the Nurse Practitioner 10 Year Plan.

Whilst this is a start, with just two of the 26 recommendations being accepted from *Educating the nurse of the future: report of the independent review of nursing education*, it is evident there is still a way to go.

2 Australian Primary Care Nurses Association (2021). *APNA Workforce Survey 2021*. Accessed from <https://www.apna.asn.au/docs/5dba4dc2-3eee-ec11-80e2-005056be66b1/APNA%20Workforce%20Survey%202021Survey.pdf>

3 Wright, L.K., Jatrana, S., & Lindsay, D. (2021). Workforce Safety in the remote health sector of Australia: a scoping review. *BMJ Open*, 11(8), 1-16. <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/11/8/e051345.full.pdf>

4 Commonwealth of Australia. (2019). *Educating the Nurse of the Future – Report of the Independent Review into Nursing Education*. Accessed from <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2019/12/educating-the-nurse-of-the-future.pdf>

