

Australian Nursing Federation

Practice Nurses, Salaries, Wages and Conditions

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Prepared by

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About this Report

In September 2011, the Australian Nursing Federation commissioned the Centre for Sustainable Organisations and Work to undertake a comparative analysis of the wages and salaries of Practice Nurses relative to those of nurses across all sectors of the health and welfare sector in Australia.

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Introduction

In September 2011, the Australian Nursing Federation commissioned the Centre for Sustainable Organisations and Work to undertake a comparative analysis of the wages and salaries of Practice Nurses relative to those of nurses across all sub-sectors of the health and welfare sector in Australia.

The report draws on a number of data sources including the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Nursing and midwifery labour force 2009 (AIHW 2011), the Association of Practice Nurses Australia's (APNA) annual Salary and Conditions Survey and the Australian General Practice Network's (AGPN) National Practice Nurse workforce survey report. This data is supplemented with a review of salary and wages data drawn from 573 enterprise agreements covering nurses employed in the acute health and aged care sectors across each state and territory of Australia.

The report shows that Practice Nurses experience work entitlements and conditions that are significantly different to nurses employed in other work locations on a number of parameters. These parameters include employment status, hours of work, all-up rates of pay and provision of loadings and penalties. The overall effect of these differences is that Practice Nurses as a group are under-compensated compared to others within the nursing occupation.

Background and Context

Drawing on the 2009 Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey (AIHW, 2011) there are an estimated 320,982 nurses registered and enrolled with Nursing Boards across Australia. The majority of these nurses (81% or 260,956) are registered nurses. The vast bulk of registered nurses hold degree qualifications, although a small number of registered nurses hold hospital-based qualifications. The remaining 19% (60,861) of nurses are recognised as enrolled nurses. The majority of enrolled nurses hold a diploma level qualification; although there is a small proportion that has a level four certificate qualification.

Nursing is a highly female dominated profession, with females comprising 90.4% of employed nurses in 2009 (down slightly from 92.1%

in 2005). The nursing workforce is also an ageing workforce with 36.3% of nurses aged 50 years and an average age of 44.3 years in 2009. This is a continuing trend, with the proportion of nurses aged over 50 increasing from 35.8% in 2005 (AIHW, 2011).

Nurses are not evenly spread across all states and territories of Australia, but are distributed relative to population density. Table one shows the number and proportion of employed nurses by state and territories across Australia.

Table 1: Number and proportion of employed registered and enrolled nurses by states and territories, Australia

NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
79,127	75,476	51,750	27,812	26,617	7,372	4,104	4,493	276,751
29%	27%	19%	10%	10%	3%	1%	2%	100%

Source: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 2009.

The majority of nurses (79.8% or 220,815) are employed mainly as clinical nurses. A further 10.8% of nurses reported working in clinical management or other administrative roles. The remaining nurses, employed in non-clinical roles, reported working in lecturing, education and/or supervision of new nurses (3.5%), working as researchers (0.8%) or other roles (5.1%) (AIHW, 2011).

Table 2: Registered and enrolled nurses: number and proportion, by labour force status and nursing role in main job, Australia, 2009

Labour force status/ nursing role in main job	2009	
In the nursing labour force	291,246	90.7%
<i>Employed in nursing</i>	276,751	95.0%
Clinical nurse	220,815	79.8%
Clinical management and/or nursing/midwifery administration	29,971	10.8%
Lecturer/teacher/educator and/or supervisor of new nurses	9,570	3.5%
Researcher	2,325	0.8%
Other	14,070	5.1%
<i>On extended leave</i>	9,880	3.6%
<i>Looking for work in nursing</i>	4,615	1.6%
Not in the nursing labour force	29,735	9.3%
Overseas	3,233	10.9%
Not looking for work in nursing	26,503	89.1%
Total registered and enrolled nurses	320,982	100%

Source: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 2009.

Approximately two thirds of all nurses are employed in the public sector, with 71% of these nurses employed in hospitals. Of the 90,557 nurses employed in the private sector 43% are employed in hospitals while a further 25% are employed in the residential aged care sector.

Table 3: Registered and enrolled nurses: number and proportion, by sector and work setting of main job, Australia, 2009

Work setting of main job	Public sector		Private sector		Total	
	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
Hospital	132,744	71%	39,512	44%	172,256	62%
Psychiatric hospital/mental health facility	9,743	5%	1,253	1%	10,996	4%
Outpatient clinic	2,853	2%	435	0%	3,288	1%
Day procedure centre	799	0%	2,836	3%	3,635	1%
Residential aged care centre	7,715	4%	22,378	25%	30,093	11%
Hospice	524	0%	265	0%	789	0%
Other residential care facility	2,067	1%	1,657	2%	3,724	1%
Community health centre	13,292	7%	1,984	2%	15,276	6%
Defence force facility	370	0%	301	0%	670	0%
Government Department	1,965	1%	128	0%	2,093	1%
Doctors' rooms/Medical practice	1,118	1%	9,955	11%	11,073	4%
School	778	0%	767	1%	1,545	1%
Commercial/industry/business	527	0%	1,730	2%	2,257	1%
Tertiary institution	2,340	1%	813	1%	3,152	1%
Other	4,075	2%	3,165	3%	7,240	3%
Not stated	5,285	3%	3,379	4%	8,664	3%
Total	186,194	100%	90,557	100%	276,751	100%

Source: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 2009.

Practice Nurses – those nurses employed in doctors' rooms and medical practices – represent 4% of all employed nurses in Australia or 11,073 nurses in 2009. They represent a more significant proportion of all private sector nurses at 11%.

The AGPN (2009) notes that nurses have been employed in general practices for many years, however, since 2004 there has been a greater focus on the role of nurses in the provision of primary care services. The combination of workforce shortages in the health sector and increased demand, due to the ageing population, higher numbers of elderly patients and patients with chronic disease, with the changing emphasis on community-based treatment has seen the role of nurses in general practice expand and develop over the last decade.

The Federal Government argues that current usage of nurses in primary health care in Australia remains lower than in other comparable health

systems such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand (Your Health, 2011). They argue that there are two primary policy aims that can be addressed by increased development of clinical roles for nurses. Firstly, the management of chronic disease within the community, rather than in acute care can be achieved more successfully through the increased use of Practice Nurses including registered nurses, enrolled nurses and Aboriginal health workers. Secondly, greater use of Practice Nurses can achieve improvements in the delivery of primary health care services and access to care services whilst helping to ease the pressure on the system caused by shortages of General Practitioners (GPs), particularly in regional and remote locations (Your Health, 2011).

Practice Nurses play a pro-active role in supporting patients to manage their health conditions, by providing preventative health programs, education programs for both patients and their carers, and by providing coordination and monitoring of acute and chronic disease, while supporting patients supported care, self management and recall and reminder systems (Your Health, 2011).

APNA identifies that practice nursing covers many specialist areas including aged care, women's health, men's health, infection control, chronic disease management, cardiovascular care, immunisation, cancer, asthma, pulmonary disease, mental health, maternal and child health, health promotion, care plans, population health, diabetes and wound management (APNA, 2009).

The Federal Government has supported the increased recruitment of nurses within general practice and improved access to education and training programs for practice nurses. In particular, the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) supports practices in rural and remote Australia and other areas of high need including Aboriginal health (AGPN 2009).

The PIP aims to recognise general practices that provide comprehensive quality care, and to provide financial incentives to encourage general practices to improve their quality of care. Incentives are provided to encourage the improvement of information management in general practices, after hours care to all patients and the better delivery of care specifically to diabetes patients (Auditor General, 2010). Government programs have also aimed at supporting practices in urban areas of workforce shortage.

The demographic characteristics of Practice Nurses differ from those of all nurses according to the Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey (AIHW, 2011). Table four below shows that Practice Nurses tend to be older than the general nursing population, a smaller proportion of Practice Nurses are male, and a higher proportion of Practice Nurses work part-time. The proportion of Practice Nurses who are registered nurses reflects the proportion of registered nurses amongst all employed nurses. That is, Practice Nurses are just as likely to be degree qualified as the broader nursing population.

Table 4: Registered and enrolled Practice nurses and all nurses: key variables by work setting of main job, Australia, 2009

Work setting of main job	Number	Aged 55+ (per cent)	Average age	Male (per cent)	Registered (per cent)	Average hours worked	Part-time (per cent)
Doctors' rooms/Medical practice	11073	21.3	46.8	2.5	80.3	28.5	67.3
Nurses, all work locations	276751	19.8	44.3	9.6	81.3	33.3	49.2

Source: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 2009.

Both registered and enrolled nurses work in doctors' rooms/medical practice. Registered nurse numbers in doctors' rooms/medical practice increased from 5304 to 8889 and enrolled nurses from 1442 to 2184 between 1995 and 2009, increasing the ratio from 73 registered/27 enrolled to 76/24. Employment growth of registered nurses was highest in Victoria (from 1158 to 2121) and Queensland (1200 to 2242) over the period. The percentage of registered nurses working in NSW fell from 29 % in 1995 to 24.8% in 2009 despite an increase in 2005 and 2007 of over 600 nurses (from 1926 to 2545). In WA, numbers nearly doubled from 519 to 923, while Queensland had the largest number of registered nurses in this work setting.

Looking at the distribution of enrolled nurses in doctors' rooms/medical practice, employment growth has been most marked in Queensland with increases between 1995 and 2009 from 200 to 501 (13.9 % to 22.9%). In contrast the percentage of enrolled nurses working in Victoria fell from 45.5% in 1995 to 29% in 2009, although Victoria had the largest number of enrolled nurses (631) in this work setting followed by Queensland with 501. NSW numbers grew, increasing the proportion from 11.6% in 1995 to 16.7% in 2009.

Table 5: Registered nurses employed in Doctors' rooms and Medical Practices by state, 1995-2009

Year	NSW	Vic	Qld	Sa	Wa	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
1995	1,541	1,158	1,200	586	519	115	34	150	5,304
1997	1,649	1,072	1,165	571	493	100	26	118	5,195
1999	1,602	1,098	1,148	544	539	104	33	131	5,198
2001	1,616	..	1,197	446	557	63	25	109	4,013
2003	1,732	1,300	1,502	620	610	157	n.p.	n.p.	6,057
2004	2,069	1,425	1,590	598	524	161	42	114	6,522
2005	1,926	1,548	1,760	620	677	173	n.p.	123	6,827
2007	2,545	1,746	1,869	662	747	237	79	91	7,974
2008	2,434	1,890	1,675	762	922	226	63	164	8,136
2009	2,205	2,121	2,242	869	923	268	85	174	8,889

Source: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 2009 Table B.8: Employed registered nurses: number, by sector and work setting of main job, states and territories, 1995 to 2009

Table 6: Enrolled Nurses employed in Doctors' rooms and Medical Practices by state, 1995-2009

	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
1995	167	656	200	182	156	43	22	16	1,442
1997	211	611	221	148	123	55	22	8	1,399
1999	224	571	229	180	154	47	28	11	1,444
2001	241	..	244	134	154	41	6	24	844
2003_	249	687	304	210	274	49	—	15	1,788
2004	318	700	276	247	192	47	13	8	1,801
2005	247	587	284	230	225	49	n.p.	12	1,633
2007	307	500	330	173	227	59	13	15	1,623
2008	339	624	438	242	260	72	7	23	2,005
2009	365	631	501	252	331	73	20	11	2,184

Source: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 2009 Table A.8: Employed enrolled nurses: number, by sector and work setting of main job, states and territories, 1995 to 2009

The AGPN and APNA have undertaken a number of surveys over the past 10 years that provide more detailed analysis of the practice nurse population and their salaries and workplace entitlements. More detailed information drawn from these surveys is provided in section four Findings, below.

Methodology

A number of data sources have been utilised in the preparation of this report.

1. Overview statistics about the nursing and midwifery labour force have been drawn from the 1995 to 2009 Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Surveys administered by the nurses' registration boards on behalf of the AIHW. Until July 2010 each state-based registration board conducted an annual renewal of registrations, and sent a survey questionnaire to all nurses as part of the registration renewal process. Each state and territory health authority then forwarded data from their survey to AIHW for national level collation (AIHW 2011). Since July 2010, the annual survey of nurses, and the registration renewal process has been undertaken by the national Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.

The response rate for the AIHW survey is based on the number of responses to the survey as a proportion of the total number of registrations and enrolments in each jurisdiction as at 30 June of each year. The overall response rate is an estimate because some nurses were registered or enrolled in more than one state or territory and may or may not have completed a questionnaire in one or more states or territories. It is not known how often this occurred because it is not possible to match records between jurisdictions. However, the number of registered or enrolled nurses in more than one jurisdiction is estimated based on responses to specific questions in the questionnaire. Since 1995, most jurisdictions have seen a decline in the response rate, with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Tasmania. It should be noted that there have been some changes made to the way that the survey has been delivered that may have had an impact on the estimated response rate (AIHW 2011).

2. More detailed data on the salary and workplace conditions of Practice Nurses has been drawn from both the APNA Annual Salary and Conditions Survey (2008, 2009, 2010, 2011) and the AGPN Workforce Survey (2009). APNA has undertaken the salary and conditions survey annually since 2004. The survey was designed by Dr Jo Lindsay from Monash University and has been applied consistently throughout the last seven years to ensure comparability of data. The online delivery of the survey and the preliminary statistical analysis has

been undertaken by the independent research organisation Ultrafeedback since 2009. APNA have provided annual reports to the researchers and have also approved the release of Ultrafeedback's database of responses for independent analysis by the researchers of this report.

Response rates to the survey have varied over time, with approximately 700 respondents in 2009, over 1000 in 2010 and more than 1100 in 2011.

Table 7: Respondents, APNA salary and conditions survey 2008-2011

Year	Number of respondents
2008	604
2009	704
2010	1084
2011	1130

Source: APNA Database 2011, Ultrafeedback.

The overall size of the response represents a statistically valid sample, and the database mirrors much of the information provided by the AIHW Nurse and Midwifery Labour Force, suggesting a robust statistical sample. However, the smaller numbers of responses from states and territories with smaller nursing populations, particularly the ACT, Northern Territory and Tasmania, make it difficult to draw conclusive statements about each state over time. The time series data provided for the whole of Australia is statistically valid and forms an important part of the analysis of Practice Nurses' salaries and conditions in this report.

The APNA survey respondents are comparable on demographic, geographic and qualification level variables to the general nursing population as identified by the AIHW. That is, there is minimal bias in the APNA sample.

Table 8: Comparison of data, APNA and AIHW for registered and enrolled Practice Nurses: key variables, Australia

Survey Data	Average age	Male (per cent)	Registered (per cent)	Average hours worked	Part-time (per cent)
AIHW practice nurses	46.8	2.5	80.3	28.5	67.3
APNA respondents	48	1.3	86.0	27-28	72.0

Source: AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 2009 and Ultrafeedback

Table 9: Comparison of data, APNA and AIHW for registered and enrolled Practice Nurses: distribution by state

	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT
APNA respondents	29%	23%	20%	10%	12%	3%	1%	2%
AIHW practice nurses	29%	27%	19%	10%	10%	3%	1%	2%

Source: APNA Database 2011, *Ultrafeedback*. and AIHW Nursing and Midwifery Labour Force Survey, 2009

3. The third stream of data utilised in this report is a survey of the salary data contained in the enterprise agreements covering nurses' employment in acute health and aged care sectors within each state and territory of Australia. A large number (573) of enterprise agreements covering nurses in all sectors of the health industry were analysed and wages and salary data was extracted. Annual and weekly rates of pay were converted to hourly rates of pay using the formulas provided within each enterprise agreement or by reference to state-based awards. Pay rates were linked to their commencement and expiry dates to allow for time series data to be analysed.

Pay rates were collected for both registered and enrolled nurses at the minimum and maximum of the entry level pay grade for each of these categories. Care was taken to ensure that rates of pay reflected equivalent levels of training and experience across each state and territory. For example, in a number of jurisdictions degree qualified nurses commence work on grade one, step one pay rate, while in other jurisdictions they commence at step two of grade one. Similarly, the rates of pay collected for enrolled nurses were based on the rates for an entry-level enrolled nurse in their first year of work and at the maximum for a level one enrolled nurse.

Data was entered into an SPSS database to allow for more detailed statistical analysis.

Findings

This section of the report reviews the key findings of the APNA survey of Practice Nurses salaries and conditions and compares these results with the salary data collected from the enterprise agreements analysed.

Workplace arrangements

The APNA survey asks respondents to identify the type of workplace arrangement that covers their employment, pay and conditions. The largest proportion of respondents (38%) are employed on individual contracts, a further 35% rely on awards, with only 6% employed under a collective agreement. Approximately 17% of Practice Nurses are unsure of or did not state the form of workplace arrangement that covers their employment. The proportion of Practice Nurses covered by awards and collective agreements is significantly different to all workers in Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Employee Earnings and Hours (2010) survey shows that across Australia 45.5% of all employees are employed under collective agreements, 16.4% under awards and 38% are employed on individual arrangements.

Over time, the APNA survey has shown a trend away from award reliance; in 2006 46% of respondents were covered by awards.

Skills and experience

The APNA survey shows that Practice Nurses tend to have a high level of skills and experience. In 2011, 65% of respondents identified that they held at least one post-graduate qualification, and some had as many as five postgraduate qualifications. Amongst Registered Nurses only, this rate is even higher at 87%. Practice Nurses also frequently hold specializations in particular types of nursing care. These specializations require regular and ongoing training updates.

Similarly, a high proportion of respondents (57%) have worked in general practice for six years or more. Under the pay rates provided in enterprise agreements, nurses with post-graduate qualifications are paid above the entry-level rate of pay. Similarly in enterprise agreements, nurses with more than six years of experience are paid at the maximum step of grade one.

Employment status and working-time patterns

Practice Nurses are highly likely to work on a part-time or casual basis. In 2011 only 23% of survey respondents reported working full-time, with 72% selecting casual or part-time employment status (5% responded with 'other' employment status or 'not stated'). This data was supported by the question 'How many hours per week, on average do you work?' 72% of respondents identified that they worked 34 hours or less per week. Responses were collected in two-hour blocks, with the average number of hours worked at 27-28 hours per week.

Table 10: What is your employment status? 2011

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Full time	257	22.7
	Part time	603	53.4
	Casual	211	18.7
	Other (please specify)	15	1.3
	Total	1086	96.1
	Not stated	44	3.9
Total		1130	100.0

Source: APNA Database 2011, *Ultrafeedback*.

The survey question conflates casual and permanent employment status with part-time and full-time hours of work. This suggests that the count of casual employees may be understated, as those casuals employed on a full-time basis are likely to select full-time hours. Permanent part-time employees are likely to select part-time status, leaving part-time casual employees as the residual group likely to select casual status. Approximately 19% of respondents identified as casuals, although it should be noted that 88% of respondents are paid on an hourly basis, rather than on a weekly or annual basis as might be expected amongst permanent employees. The existence of a significant proportion of casuals should inflate Practice Nurse rates of pay, as casuals are paid a loading of 25% to compensate for their casual status and lack of paid annual leave.

All-up rates of pay

Given that Practice Nurses are generally paid an hourly rate of pay, it is important to understand whether this rate of pay has been calculated

to include regular evening or weekend work or overtime payments. Amongst acute care and aged care nurses covered by awards and enterprise agreements, base rates of pay are supplemented by penalties and loadings for work during unsociable hours, including weekends and evenings. It is estimated that for nurses in these sectors approximately 30% of their take-home earnings are generated from penalties and loadings. This figure is based on a nurse working a relatively standard roster that includes some shifts and weekend work.

The APNA survey asks participants if they receive overtime, shiftwork or weekend payments on top of their base pay. Table 11 below shows that 22% of participants receive overtime payments, 16% receive weekend payments and 9% receive payments for shiftwork.

Table 11: Access to penalties and loadings, 2011

	Yes	No
Do you receive any of the following entitlements on top of your base pay? Overtime	21.7%	78.3%
Do you receive any of the following entitlements on top of your base pay? Weekend penalties	16.3%	83.7%
Do you receive any of the following entitlements on top of your base pay? Shift allowance	8.7%	91.3%

Source: APNA Database 2011, Ultrafeedback.

In examining the data in more detail, it was found that 67% of participants did not receive any form of penalties, 22% receive one of the three penalties, eight percent receive two of the three penalties and only three percent receive all three types of penalties. These findings suggest that most Practice Nurses are paid an 'all-up rate' that is calculated to include penalties and loadings.

The APNA survey also asks participants whether they receive allowances, such as uniform allowances on top of their base pay. Only 24% of participants received such an allowance. Uniform allowances are a standard payment for nurses covered by awards and enterprise agreements.

Given that for nurses in the acute health and aged care sectors the base rate of pay is heavily supplemented with penalties, loadings and allowances while the base rate of pay for Practice Nurses is intended to include these extra payments the comparability of rates of pay needs to be reviewed.

Salaries

The 2011 APNA survey found that the average hourly rate of pay for Practice Nurses across Australia was \$30.46. However, this rate conflates the rates for enrolled and registered nurses as well as those with greater skills and qualifications. Table 12 below shows a breakdown of the average rates of pay by qualification levels.

The average hourly rate for enrolled nurses in 2011 was \$25.17 and for registered nurses was \$31.11. Details are provided for nurses with other qualifications, but given the small sample sizes for these groups the figures should be treated with caution.

Table 12: Average hourly rates of pay for Practice Nurses by qualification level, 2011

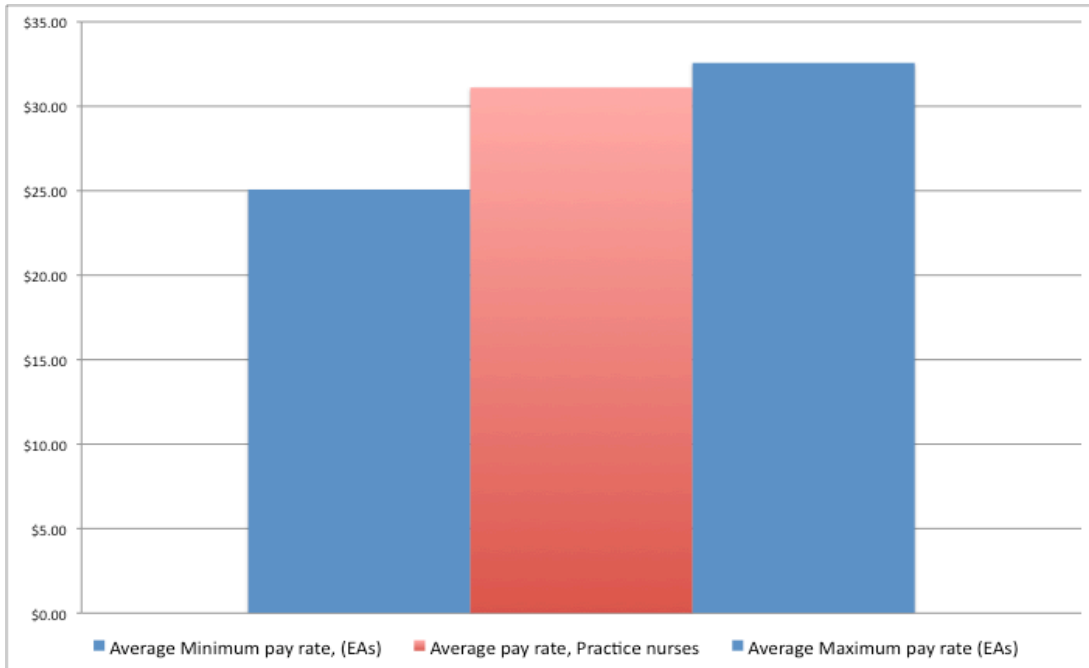
What is your gross hourly rate of pay?

What base-level qualification do you hold?	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Enrolled Nurse (RN Div 2)	\$25.17	95	2.909
Registered Nurse (RN Div 1)	\$31.11	720	5.212
Midwife	\$31.75	44	7.029
Nurse Practitioner	\$34.75**	4	7.805
Other (please specify)	\$30.15**	26	4.523
Total	\$30.46	890	5.530

Source: APNA Database 2011, *Ultrafeedback*. ** sample size less than 30

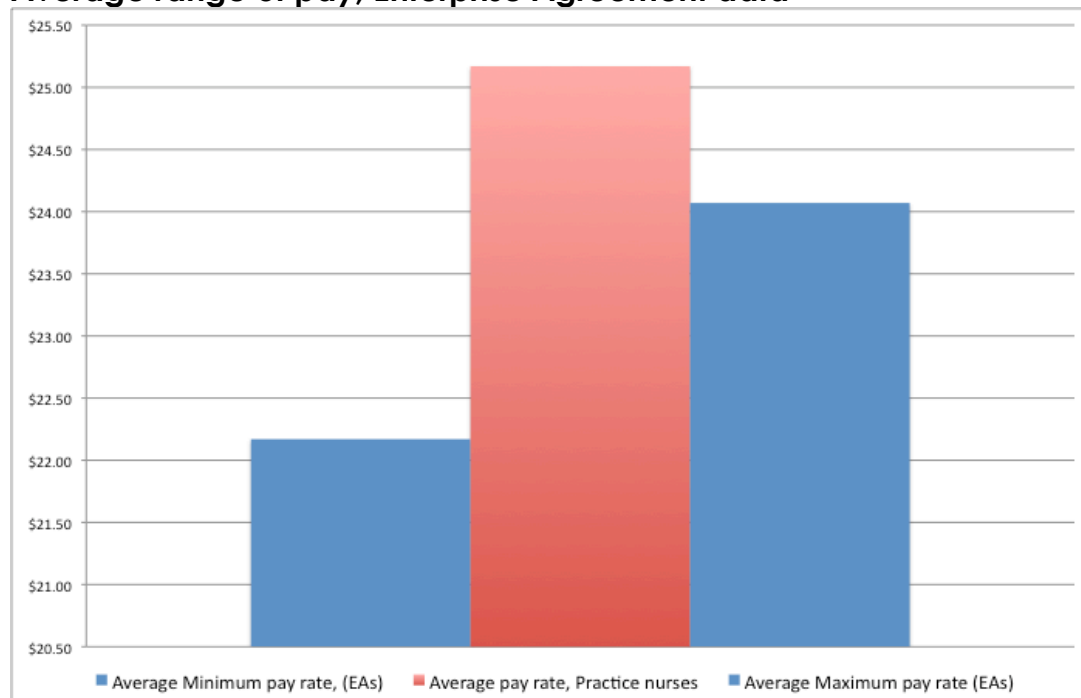
In analysing the salary and wages data from the enterprise agreements covering nurses in the acute health and aged-care sectors, rates were collected for registered and enrolled nurses at both the minimum and maximum of entry level pay grades. Thus, rather than a single average rate of pay, the enterprise agreement data provides average pay ranges for each qualification level. For registered nurses, across all Australia, the average range was \$25.07 to \$32.57, whilst for enrolled nurses the average range was \$22.17 to \$24.07. Figure 1 below shows the range of pay for registered nurses from the enterprise agreement data and the average hourly rate provided by the APNA data. Figure 2 shows the same data for enrolled nurses.

Figure 1: Average hourly rate of pay, registered nurses, APNA data and Average range of pay, Enterprise Agreement data



Source: APNA Database 2011, Ultrafeedback and data collated from enterprise agreements

Figure 2: Average hourly rate of pay, enrolled nurses, APNA data and Average range of pay, Enterprise Agreement data



Source: APNA Database 2011, Ultrafeedback and data collated from enterprise agreements

Table 13 below draws on the APNA database to show how the average hourly rates for practice nurses, both enrolled and registered, have changed over the last four years.

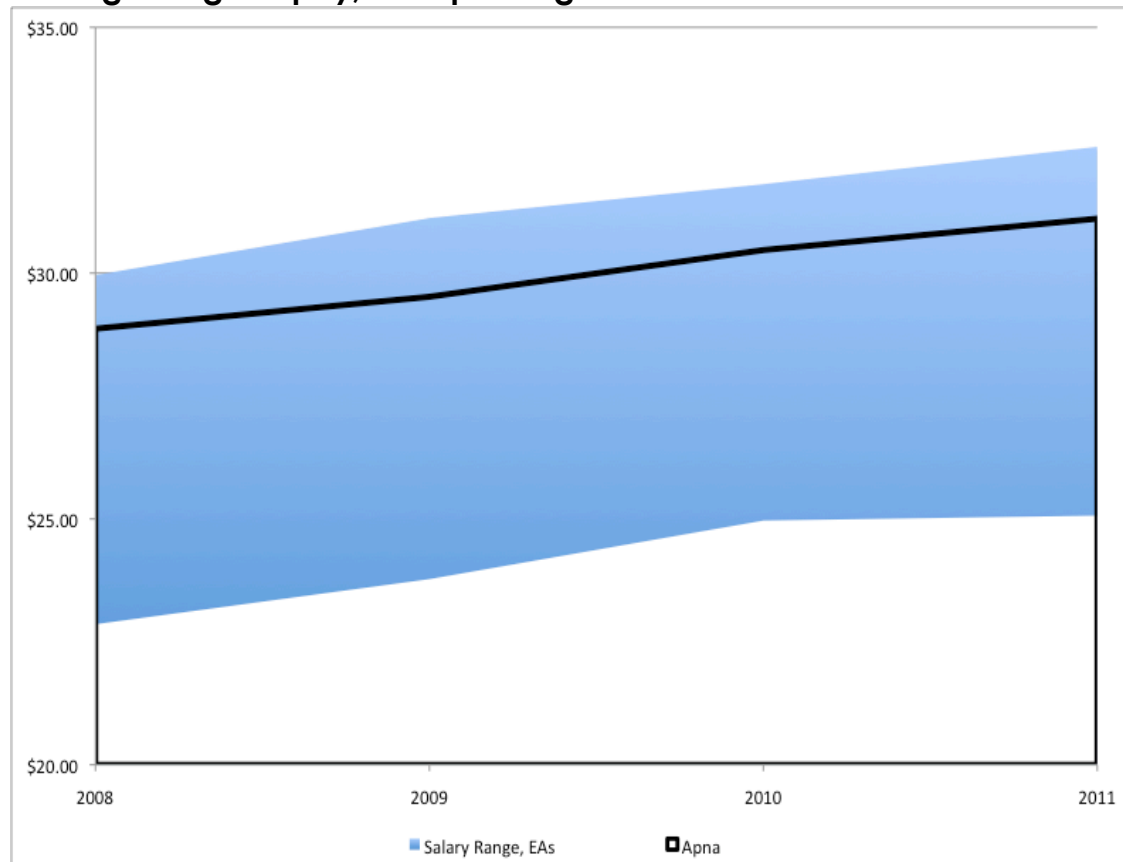
Table 13: Average hourly rates of pay, Practice Nurses, registered and enrolled nurses 2008-2011

	2008	2009	2010	2011
Enrolled Nurse (RN Div 2)	\$22.39**	\$24.02	\$23.78	\$25.17
Registered Nurse (RN Div 1)	\$28.87	\$29.52	\$30.47	\$31.11

Source: APNA Database 2011, Ultrafeedback. ** sample size less than 30

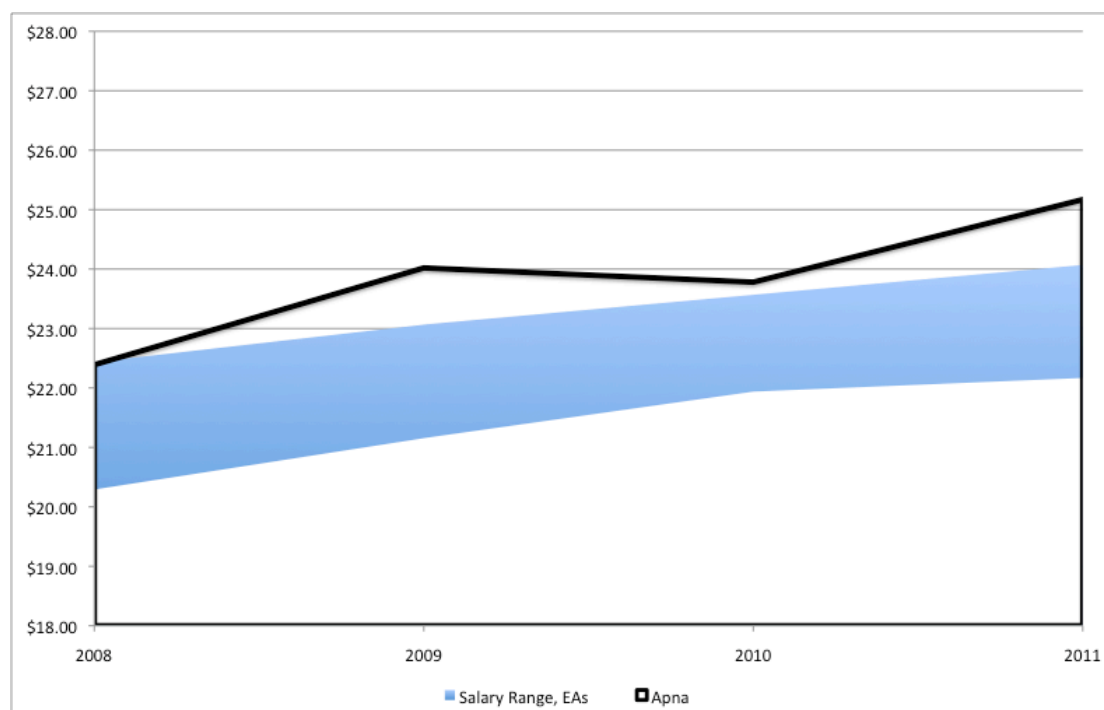
Figure 3 shows how the average hourly rates of pay of registered Practice Nurses compares with the average salary range of registered nurses in enterprise agreements between 2008 and 2011. Figure 4 shows how the hourly rates of enrolled Practice Nurses compares with the salary range for enrolled nurses in enterprise agreements over the same period.

Figure 3: Average hourly rate of pay, registered nurses, APNA data and average range of pay, enterprise agreement data 2008-2011



Source: APNA Database 2011, Ultrafeedback and data collated from enterprise agreements

Figure 4: Average hourly rate of pay, enrolled nurses, APNA data and average range of pay, enterprise agreement data 2008-2011



Source: APNA Database 2011, *Ultrafeedback* and data collated from enterprise agreements

Drawing on the APNA survey data it is possible to provide a breakdown of the average hourly rates of Practice Nurses by state, but given that the total sample for enrolled nurses was only 95 in 2011, the sample size for each state is less than 30 and should therefore be treated with care. The sample size for registered nurses is more robust, with only Tasmania and the Territories providing samples of less than 30.

Table 14: Average hourly rates of pay, Practice Nurses, enrolled and registered nurses by state 2011

	NSW	QLD	VIC	SA	WA	TAS	ACT and NT	Australia
Enrolled Nurse (RN Div 2)	\$24.60**	\$25.89**	\$24.70**	\$23.67**	\$26.13**	\$22.67**	\$28.00**	\$25.17
Registered Nurse (RN Div 1)	\$32.00	\$29.69	\$31.16	\$30.65	\$30.64	\$33.52**	\$34.25**	\$31.12

Source: APNA Database 2011, *Ultrafeedback*. ** sample size less than 30

Tables 15 and 16 provide a detailed breakdown of the average maximum and minimum rates of pay for registered and enrolled nurses by state, public/private sector and sub-sector. This allows a

comparison of practice nurse rates of pay in each state, by public and private employers within the acute health and aged-care residential sectors across Australia.

Table 15: Registered nurses, average hourly rate by state and sector, maximum and minimum

		State								
Sector	Subsector	QLD	NSW	VIC	TAS	SA	WA	NT	ACT	All Australia
Public	Acute Max	\$36.76	\$37.47	\$32.64	\$33.96	\$34.19	\$35.32	\$35.23	\$35.36	\$35.12
	Acute Min	\$27.32	\$26.68	\$24.66	\$25.69	\$25.72	\$26.84	\$26.63	\$26.17	\$26.21
Private (inc NFP)	Acute Max	\$35.26	\$34.19	\$32.51	\$34.29	\$30.77	\$33.89	\$35.59	\$36.30	\$33.41
	Acute Min	\$27.44	\$24.92	\$24.66	\$26.22	\$25.08	\$25.70	\$26.90	\$26.51	\$25.59
	Residential Max	\$29.04	\$32.87	\$28.52	\$31.55	\$29.62	\$32.72	\$26.26	\$30.18	\$29.20
	Residential Min	\$24.04	\$24.72	\$22.51	\$23.81	\$22.69	\$25.47	\$21.37	\$24.11	\$23.41

Source: Data collated from enterprise agreements

Table 16: Enrolled nurses, average hourly rate by state and sector, maximum and minimum

		State								
Sector	Subsector	QLD	NSW	VIC	TAS	SA	WA	NT	ACT	All Australia
Public	Acute Max	\$26.11	\$25.62	\$24.52	\$24.25	\$24.81	NA	\$26.63	\$25.32	\$25.32
	Acute Min	\$24.51	\$24.05	\$22.43	\$22.81	\$21.93	NA	\$23.56	\$23.62	\$23.27
Private (inc NFP)	Acute Max	\$25.85	\$24.33	\$24.59	\$25.57	\$24.14	\$23.78	\$26.90	\$25.97	\$24.65
	Acute Min	\$24.18	\$22.03	\$21.57	\$24.56	\$21.57	\$22.40	\$23.80	\$23.93	\$22.52
	Residential Max	\$21.23	\$22.40	\$22.15	\$23.21	\$22.89	\$21.75	\$21.22	\$22.06	\$22.26
	Residential Min	\$20.75	\$21.03	\$20.46	\$21.41	\$20.52	\$21.42	\$20.08	\$20.68	\$20.72

Source: Data collated from enterprise agreements

Conclusion

Using a broad range of data sources, this report shows that the practice nurse population is significantly different from the general population of employed nurses. Practice nurses are on average older than the general nurse population, are even more likely to be women than the general nurse population, and are more likely to work on a part-time basis. Their qualification levels are on par with the population of employed nurses, and generally speaking, they have high levels of skill with strong post-graduate qualifications and specializations in key areas of nursing care. They are also more experienced in their roles than the population of employed nurses, with many holding their current role for more than six years.

The role of practice nurse is of growing importance within the health and community sector, and Practice Nurses have an important role in improving the quality of care in the community through the management of chronic disease, and by helping to ease the pressure on the system caused by shortages of GPs, particularly in regional and remote locations.

Practice Nurses have, to date, had little access to the process of enterprise bargaining. The majority of Practice Nurses are employed under individual contracts or rely on the award rates of pay.

Given the relatively high proportion of Practice Nurses who are employed on a casual basis, and the strong reliance on all-up rates of pay rather than a series of penalties, loadings and allowances, as well as the levels of skills and experience held by practice nurses, one would expect the average hourly rates of pay for Practice Nurses to be significantly higher than the range of hourly rates for nurses in the acute health and residential aged-care sectors. In fact, for registered practice nurses, the average hourly rate of pay sits at only 95% of the maximum average rate of pay for Grade 1 nurses within the acute health and residential aged-care sectors.

Enrolled Practice Nurses fare slightly better, than registered Practice Nurses with an average hourly rate that is marginally higher than the average rates for enrolled nurses across the acute health and residential aged-care sectors. However, the enrolled Practice Nurse rate is only 4.5% higher than the average maximum rate of pay across the other sectors, and is not as high as expected.

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