

Nursing labour force 1995

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Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Board Chair
Professor Janice Reid

Director
Dr Richard Madden

Any enquiries about or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Labour Force Unit
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
GPO Box 570
Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6244 1153

Email: john.harding@aihw.gov.au

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Foreword

The nursing labour force is a vital component of Australia's health services. Availability of nurses has historically been subject to sharp cyclical swings. With the ageing of the population, monitoring of all aspects of the nurse labour force, especially student numbers and labour force participation, is an important activity recognised by the national decision to maintain a national data collection every two years.

The number of registered and enrolled nurses fell from 281,452 in 1993 to 265,753 in 1997. Data in this publication generally refer to 1995 when the number of registered and enrolled nurses was 267,535.

These totals mask three notable changes:

- The 11.4% drop in Australian permanent resident student nurse numbers for students commencing basic nursing training, from 8,528 in 1993 (down from a peak of 9,347 in 1991) to 7,552 in 1997.
- The 20.1% decrease in enrolled nurse registrations from 68,825 in 1993 to 54,961 in 1997, and the 0.9% decrease in registered nurse registrations from 212,630 in 1993 to 210,792 in 1997.
- During the ten year period from 1985-86 to 1995-96, the almost 50% increase in the number of inpatients in acute care public hospitals per full-time-equivalent nurse employed.

The composition of the nursing labour force, and the various incentives and disincentives for training and participation, merit continuing close attention by health and education agencies.

Richard Madden
Director

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