

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) is urging all parties to recognise the importance of our workforce in establishing a health system that can deliver the care Australians deserve.

‘Matching and forecasting the needs, demands and supply of the health workforce is complex in any context,’ says AHHA Acting Chief Executive Kylie Woolcock.

‘However, ahead of the upcoming Federal Election, urgent action is needed to address workforce issues in Australia’s health system if it is to continue to provide vital services to the community.’

The National Skills Commission estimates that in the next five years, significant growth in the health and social sector will require an increase of 301,000 skilled workers nationally.

‘This is against a backdrop of a pandemic that has exacerbated the impact and pervasiveness of workforce burnout. We’re seeing our existing workforce less willing to work than before.

A survey of frontline healthcare staff by Edith Cowan University during Australia’s first wave of COVID-19, revealed that one-third of participants reported at least one symptom of burnout (35%) and depression (30%) and 16% disclosed absenteeism. Eased COVID restrictions have placed a further burden on our health workforce due to furloughed staff. If not addressed, the decline of Australia’s health workforce will be a major contributor to health system failure.

‘They not only see their own safety being compromised, but in conditions where staffing is insufficient, they also see the quality and safety of the care they provide being compromised. And this impacts the motivation that drove them to join our health workforce in the first place.

‘But it’s not just about numbers and distribution. While action is needed to address the immediate shortfalls in workforce numbers, a sustainable workforce will need system-level solutions – solutions that don’t look at each part of the workforce in silos or ignore their safety and wellbeing.

‘These solutions should allow for the workforce to operate in well-supported teams to provide care that is built around the health needs and goals of people and their communities. They should bring together clinical and non-clinical roles for care pathways that drive improved outcomes.

‘We need a whole-of-workforce vision and strategy to align the many parts of our system. Together we must create the environment that will attract and retain a health workforce that delivers high-quality and sustainable care.’

The online version of this [media release](#) and our [2022 Election Statement](#) may be found on the AHHA website. **The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit healthcare.**

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