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## Protecting Quality Nursing Education Standards: in everyone's interests

Following recent developments from the Aotearoa New Zealand's University Advisory Group's [recommendations on university education](#), the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand [CDNM]) highlights the critical importance of maintaining bachelor-degree standards for registered nurses to ensure patient and whānau safety and healthcare quality.

The University Advisory Group's report contested whether universities should provide entry-level qualifications for registered nurses. It also suggested that "shorter forms of education may be more appropriate" for caring professions to improve cost efficiency. While financial concerns are an important consideration, any changes to nursing education standards must prioritise patient and whānau safety and be evidence-based.

"There is overwhelming global evidence that patients and whānau receive better care when nurses are educated to at least bachelor-degree level," said Professor Julia Slark, CDNM Aotearoa New Zealand Chair. "We support discussions about sustainable funding, but these conversations must centre on patient and whānau outcomes."

International research consistently demonstrates that bachelor-degree educated nurses deliver improved patient and whānau outcomes, better uptake of new technologies, enhanced critical thinking capabilities, and stronger foundations for adapting to evolving healthcare needs. Modern nursing requires professionals who can integrate complex clinical knowledge, make critical decisions impacting patient safety, and apply research evidence to improve care.

Research-rich environments provide essential foundations including direct connections between current evidence and practice, critical thinking development, and comprehensive preparation balancing theoretical knowledge with practical skills.

Reducing nursing education standards not only affects patient and whānau outcomes but also leads to greater long-term costs by increasing the risk of medical errors, prolonged hospital stays, and workforce instability. "We're committed to working with government on sustainable funding models while maintaining quality," said Professor Slark. "However, nursing is a complex professional discipline requiring research-rich education. Patient and whānau safety must remain our priority."

Evidence also supports overall system benefits when healthcare is delivered by bachelor-degree qualified nurses. Professor Slark added, "Nurses are increasingly working to more advanced scopes of practice, leading to even greater use of this important workforce and enhanced patient and whānau access. Maximising our nursing workforce in this way is only possible with appropriately qualified nurses."

### About the CDNM

The Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand) (CDNM) is the peak organisation representing universities and other higher education institutions that offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs in nursing and midwifery throughout Australia and New Zealand.

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