

Australia's Ultimate Nurses' Advice Guide

CAREER TIPS YOU WISH YOU'D
KNOWN FROM THE START



“Communication is key. Clear, compassionate conversations with patients, families, and colleagues minimize misunderstandings and improve care.”

– Olivia

“Do not speak as though the oldies are little kids, they aren't and they deserve respect.
Talk to them not at them.”

– Deb

“Put yourself in your clients shoes. How would you like to be treated?”

– Georgette

“Work on building confidence and assertiveness by viewing challenges as opportunities to grow. Set boundaries, stand your ground, and address bullying firmly while promoting respect and fairness.”

– Teagan

“Do the specialty you want, not the one you feel like you have to do.”

– Julien

Medication names are different – and confusing!

The biggest shock of my first shift in Australia? Medication names. When someone asked me to check some Panadol, I blinked at them like they’d just asked me to recite the periodic table. Back home, it’s called paracetamol, and I’d honestly never heard it referred to as anything else. Same with Nurofen for ibuprofen – that was about as “international” as my medication knowledge got.

Thankfully, a lovely British nurse took me under her wing and guided me through this new medication world. Fast forward a year and a half, and now I’m grabbing Panadol out of the cupboard like I was born here. No hesitation, no confusion – just smooth sailing. But trust me, those first few shifts were a learning curve!

– Emily

“Never stop learning. Healthcare evolves constantly, so staying updated on techniques, regulations, and best practices ensures confidence and competence.”

– Olivia

“If you dont know, ask. I would prefer someone ask me 10 times & get it right, as opposed to not asking & getting it wrong.”

– Deb

“In rural nursing, **inventory management is your lifeline.** Create a system where you regularly track, evaluate, and restock supplies—it can make all the difference when supplies take weeks to arrive. ”

– Lisa

“Ask more questions **Ask for help when needed.**”

– Martine

“When you work in healthcare in Australia, just stay open and collaborative. **Take time to learn local practices and share ideas** in a way that feels like teamwork—it really helps build respect and trust.”

– *Joani*

“**Don't do it, if you aren't trained**, no matter who asks.”

– *Deb*

“**Use care plans rigorously**. The best outcomes come from tailored approaches built on firm processes that meet individual patient needs.”

– *Linda*

“**Set boundaries early**. Learn to say no and set realistic expectations to prevent overworking and burnout.”

– *Olivia*

Your experience is valued — more than you realize.

Before moving, I was terrified I'd feel like a student nurse all over again. Would my skills transfer? Would I have to start from scratch? But honestly, I couldn't have been more wrong. From day one, my experience was respected, and I was treated as part of the team.

Being so far from family and familiar comforts (like a proper cup of tea — essentials, right?), it was easy to feel overwhelmed. But the Australian nurses welcomed me with open arms. I could ask questions without fear of judgment, and when I raised concerns, my opinion was valued.

At first, I was given “lighter” patients to help me find my feet, which I really appreciated. But once I gained confidence, the team encouraged me to take on more complex cases. Now, I've even had the chance to shift lead — something I'd never done before. With the guidance of experienced Aussie nurses, I've grown into a more confident nurse than I ever imagined.

– Emily

"Have in mind your primary focus or goal and have in mind what ever you are doing do it like your own."

- Amadin

"I wish I knew about rostering and how I needed to put down for days off weeks or even months before the day I needed off. So be prepared to miss family events at times.

Always remember to take time out if things get to much the loo is a great place for 5 minutes to gather your strength back to finish your day. Wear comfortable shoes or you are going to have trouble with your body as you get older and **learn your body mechanics for a better long nursing life** as I wished that I knew what I am going through now in my new retirement , trust me it's not worth you saying to yourself this won't happen to me. Get a good physio to help you learn to look after yourself."

- Joanne

“Listening to patients, understanding their emotional needs and building strong relationship with colleagues also managing time.”

– Wonesai

“Okay, this one might sound trivial, but hear me out. In the UK, scrubs were blue. Plain blue. The only time we got a taste of fun was during Christmas week when you’d dust off your festive top for a few shifts.

But in Australia? Especially as an agency nurse? The ward is my catwalk. Pink, purple, patterns — you name it.

Sure, permanent staff might have stricter dress codes, but **I’m embracing my fun scrub era while I can. It might be a small thing, but trust me, it brightens up those long shifts.”**

– Emily

“Treat new staff with respect.”

– Michelle

"1. You are replaceable to the hospital not to your family. 2. Prioritise sleep, nutrition, hydration and moving your body. 3. The only stupid question is the one you don't ask. 4. **You will make mistakes, we are human, own up to it, be honest, learn from it and move on.**"

- Michelle

"Empathy matters more than anything. A kind word or gentle touch can leave a lasting impact on your patients."

- Olivia

"Keep standardised labour and delivery protocols handy. In the heat of the moment, you'll want processes that keep care consistently high-quality."

- Rachel

"Always have a rationale for what you do."

- Carolyn

“Treat your patients as if they are your own family, take care of your mental health, the way you care for your patient is what they remember.”

– Laura

“That the hours are long. It was surprising how little some family members spend time with their aged loved ones.”

– Daine

“You can’t pour from an empty cup. **Prioritize rest, hydration, and mental well-being** so you can provide better care for others.”

– Olivia

“Learn about who you caring for. Ask them questions, these oldies have so much information & stories to share and they love telling people.”

– Deb

“Be kind to yourself, **nursing is about learning** don't hide or pretend when you don't know something.”

– ***Ipaloshence***

“**You can't control others from manipulation.** But you can only control how you respond to it.”

– ***Peta***

“**Documentation saves you.** Timely, accurate records are crucial for patient safety and your legal protection—document everything.”

– ***Olivia***

1. Never make assumption. 2. Always go with factual information 3. Be a good time manager

– ***Roger***

"As an AIN who started when I was 22 and now 43 during my time the one thing that I think and believe should be set up in every town and city is a dedicated Nurses house where we can all attend that has it all from councillors to doctors refresher courses to computers books first aid classes that are free I have been out of nursing for 3 years now because I was offered the help I needed when a resident died in my arms on the toilet (my first death) all I got from my employers roster clerk was call this number and talk to them."

- Germaine

"Be kind, always listen to patient even though they will always change the story, **don't judge until you listen to the whole story**, don't judge because of where they came from we are all the same."

- Roger

"I learned to love the clients and their values."

- Nabintu

"It's important to store the good times and beautiful memories about those good days inside you so you don't quit. Those memories can sustain you while you are putting up with really bad behaviour. Sometimes you have to take a long break or long holiday away from the healthcare sector. It can be a very toxic environment. This is why I love nurse agency work. They're short contracts and you can get that time to mentally and/or physically recuperate.

Agency nursing is by far the best way to keep your career as a nurse health practitioner."

- Karen

"Document Document Document! Always cover yourself with great documentation otherwise you have nothing but your memory and this won't help you when questioned."

- Amy-Louise

"I Have been a Division 1 RN for 40 years. **My advice is that you can thoroughly enjoy your career if you keep learning new skills**, and can move to areas that inspire you. Have fun."

- Paula

"Be caring and compassionate... Be confident in yourself.. Remain respectful at all times... **Update your skills at every chance**... Be efficient n maintain dignity for all."

- Angela

"Over the 10Yrs career journey, I've appreciated putting myself in patient's shoes "What if it's me in need". Especially pain. Pain is a very noxious experience. The empathy feeling has caused me to always try to do my best for my patients. **To conclude, putting myself into patient's shoes has taught me that it's not just about ending your shift, it's about the lives you have touched** with quality empathetic service to someone who needs it most."

- Robert

"1. Stand your ground and trust yourself especially if you're young - being young doesn't necessarily mean being inexperienced. 2. Find a friend someone who makes the hard moments easier - they will be what gets you through your rough days 3. When they say you never stop learning (or teaching) they mean it.

You learn from your co-workers from your update modules and you especially learn from your patients/residents!"

- Aliza

"Advice I have learnt is **be yourself and be honest** take your time and always do your best."

- Patricia

"Adaptability is a strength. No two days in healthcare are the same. Being flexible and quick-thinking helps you tackle unexpected challenges."

- Deb

“Take the time to listen to your patients—it will always make them feel valued and cared for.”

– Harry I

“Before starting a procedure, double-check that you have all the resources you need. Following protocols reduces risks of delays or complications.”

– Emily

“Consistent handover processes are crucial. Make sure to pass on detailed information during shift changes to ensure seamless care for residents.”

– Susan

“Double-check medication dosages, no matter how many times you’ve done it before.”

– Daniella

“Physical touch, like holding a hand, **can mean the world to an elderly patient.”**

– Mark

“Learn to navigate tricky conversations with empathy, especially when discussing end-of-life care.”

– Grace

“Help new moms feel empowered in their birthing experience—it’s their journey.”

– Olivia

“Be organised with medical supplies; in remote areas, you might not have access to what you need right away.”

– Ben

“Respect the culture of the community you serve and value their traditions.”

– Maria

“Telehealth is your ally; become comfortable using it to manage patient care remotely.”

– Daine

“Develop good relationships with local community leaders—they’ll support you in delivering better healthcare.”

– Jackie

“Always familiarize yourself with your facility’s policies and procedures. Processes may vary between workplaces, and knowing them can help avoid mistakes.”

– Sarah