Patients benefiting from 59 per cent increase in practice nurses

Today the 2007 National Practice Nurse Workforce Survey Report was released showing that over the last two years patients have benefitted from the 59 per cent increase (4924-7824) in the numbers of nurses working in general practices across the country.

Co-authors of the report the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) believe these figures highlight the essential and expanding roles nurses play in helping patients receive access to and advice from local health services.

AGPN Chair Dr Tony Hobbs said "Practice nurses are core members of the general practice team and play an important role in chronic disease prevention and care; perform clinical procedures; and conduct ‘wellness’ programs.

“This frees up GP’s time to concentrate on more complex medical problems.

“Employing a practice nurse can, on average allow, GPs to see an additional 800 patients per year.

“Australia is suffering from severe workforce shortages and practice nurses can help alleviate that stress being placed on GPs,” Dr Hobbs said.

Despite the growth, there has not been an even distribution of practice nurses being employed in urban Australia compared with regional centres. This is reflects the availability of an incentive being paid to practices in rural areas and areas categorised as suffering workforce shortages.

“AGPN are continuing to actively lobby the Federal Government to extend the incentive to all practices in Australia. We believe this would significantly increase the numbers of nurses within urban general practices.

“There are very few Australian communities not feeling the effects of GP workforce shortages. This is reflected in GPs having to close their books to new patients or have long waiting lists for their patients to access care.

“We will continue to advocate for an extension of this practice nurse incentive payment to ensure all Australians have access to appropriate and timely health care services,” Dr Hobbs said.

For a copy of the report please visit www.agpn.com.au To organise a media interview please call
AGPN Communications Manager Kathryn Conroy on 0416 428 678