Meta-analysis of mental health nursing report recommendations

Australia was the first country to develop a national strategy for the modernisation of mental health services. Australian Health Ministers signed the first Mental Health Plan in 1992 since that time there have been four subsequent National Mental Health Plans. Despite a significant increase in government funding over the years there remain a number of significant issues including:
- a predicted undersupply of mental health nurses;
- an ageing mental health care workforce contributed to by high exit rates and a low level of new entrants; and
- provision of mental health nursing professional learning and development, and mental health care professional learning for generalist nurses across all Australian jurisdictions.

In addition there have been nine reports that have made recommendations on the role of mental health nursing in the delivery of better mental health care for all Australians. A summary of the report recommendations is outlined in the table below.

Table 1. Summary of report recommendations 1993-2014

Report	Summary/Recommendations
1993 - Report of the National inquiry concerning the human rights of people with mental illness "Burdekin Report" – Australian Human Rights Commission.	The Burdekin Report was much broader than mental health nursing as it was focused on the human rights of mental health care patients. However, it made a number of recommendations including on:: - National standards on mental health care treatment and minimum staffing levels - Support for community based mental health care services and professionals through Medicare - A national strategy to encourage recruitment and retention of mental health professionals in the public heath sector - A national review of mental health education and training systems and - That tertiary based nurse education programs must accord higher priority to mental health nurse training

Report	Summary/Recommendations
1995 - Review of Mental Health Nursing in Australia and New Zealand - Australian and New Zealand College of Mental Health Nurses	- More support for community based mental health care. - National strategy to encourage recruitment and retention of mental health professionals in the public health sector. - A national review of mental health education and training systems . - Undergraduate nursing programs must accord higher priorityto mental health nurse training. - More professional learning in mental health for all nurses. - More professional development for nursing working in the mental health area. - Greater promotion of the role of mental health nurses in the delivery of mental health care in all contexts.
2000 - Scoping Study of the Australian Mental Health Nursing Workforce - Australian and New Zealand College of Mental Health Nurses	This report was the outcome of the first national scoping study of the mental health nursing workforce in Australia. It focuses on the problems of recruiting and retaining mental health nurses and the current challenges facing mental health nursing education. The study focussed on key issues affecting attraction, retention and preparation of mental health nurses and included the following recommendations: - Create a national Infrastructure for the planning and development of the mental health Nursing workforce - Improve mental health nursing education - Expand the scope of mental health nursing practice - Halt the decline in the mental health nursing workforce - Attract mental health nurses to regional rural and isolated communities - Strengthen the role of the Australian and New Zealand College of Mental Health Nurses Inc.
2003 - Australian Mental Health Nurse Supply, Recruitment and Retention - Australian Health	Wide consultation process undertaken through stakeholders consultation and focus groups. Report notes five main groupings of issues: awareness; education; workplace (including working conditions); regulation/accreditation and re-entry. Recommendations developed reflected findings of reports related to the mental health workforce produced in the previous five years. Education recommendations included -

Report	Summary/Recommendations
Workforce Advisory Committee	- Develop agreed framework for mental health content in under graduate/comprehensive nursing degree - Develop rewarding workplace experiences/improved clinical placements - Consider development of specific competencies - Universities should ensure that mental health consumers and carers are involved in course development and delivery for both undergraduate and post graduate mental health nursing courses - Better support for new grads - Establish research centres or opportunities for mental health nursing research. Registration recommendations - Jurisdictions consider ways to overcome regulatory/industrial complexity/barriers to mental health nursing - Jurisdictions consider how NPs in mental health can assist mental health nursing career pathways - Re-entry incentives Marketing recommendations: - Develop a marketing strategy. - Use practising mental health nurses and mental health consumers for promotion of services within schools, universities and vocational training settings - Provide easy access to career information - Maximise efforts to de-mystify and de-stigmatise mental health illness and mental health nursing Workforce recommendations - Provide appropriate professional development - Strengthen role of consumers and carers in mental health workplaces - Work towards flexible rostering - Promote and improve occupational health and safety procedures and personal safety at work - Investigate mechanisms that promote recognition of mental health nurse contributions - Promote decision making, problem solving and teamwork skills within workplaces - Examine career transition and career path opportunities

Report	Summary/Recommendations
2006 - Select Committee on Mental Health: A national approach to mental health - from crisis to community	The select Committee conducted a wide ranging inquiry into mental health issues from whether the National Mental Health Strategy was achieving its aims and objectives to the potential for new models of delivery of mental health care. Recommendations included - A increase funding for mental health services, with an emphasis on community mental health care services. - Increase incentives for mental health nursing workforce education and training programmes. - Increase incentives for mental health care professional learning for the health care workforce. - National standards for the treatment and care of mental health patients, including minimum staffing levels. - National standards for the delivery of mental health care. - Expanded Scope of Practice for mental health nurses working in both community and acute mental health care settings.
2008 - Mental Health Workforce: Supply of Mental Health Nurses	The report outlined a number of strategies for consideration including: - Greater support for mental health care units and majors within nursing degrees. - Ongoing support for programs to attract graduate nurses to mental health. - Improvements to clinical mental health placements for nursing students. - Further development of mental health NP roles. - Ongoing development and support for EN roles in mental health. - Development and support of pathways for **nurses** to move between general nursing and mental health. - Promotion of the mental health setting for graduate nurse placement. - Promotion and marketing of practicing in mental health
2008 – Final Report : Mental Health in pre-registration nursing courses- Supply of Mental Health Nurse Education Taskforce	The report funded by AHMAC, aimed to identify innovative approaches to pre-registration mental health nursing education, and to develop an agreed framework for mental health content within undergraduate nursing curricula. Recommendations included: - National mental health framework and benchmarks for pre-registration nursing curricula. - Strengthening mental health content in pre-registration programs and promoting collaboration between universities and health services. - More mental health nursing scholarships with an increased emphasis on the delivery of mental health care in a community care context - National approach to securing mental health clinical placements, including placements in NGOs, the private and

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	public sectors. - Establishment and maintenance of a 'clearing house' of teaching resources for mental health. - A Mental Health Workforce Advisory Committee be established to monitor the implementation of these recommendations.
2009 - A Healthier Future for All Australians - National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission	The final report provides a national plan for health reform. It identified a fragmented health system with a complex division of funding responsibilities and performance accountabilities between different levels of government. Recommendations in relation to mental health nursing were numerous and included: - hospital based services to be linked with multidisciplinary community based services that support 'stepped' prevention and 'recovery' care - greater investment in mental health competency training for the primary healthcare workforce, both undergraduate and postgraduate and that this training be formally assessed as part of curricula accreditation processes.\ - a sustained national community awareness campaign to increase mental health literacy and reduce the stigma attached to mental health illness - more effective mechanisms for consumer and carer participation and feedback to shape programs and service delivery
2014 - Report of the National Review of Mental Health Programmes and Services – National Mental Health Commission	The report identified the need for an agreed or consistent national measure of effective outcomes with reform required to improve the longer term sustainability of the mental health system based on three key components: person centred design; new system architecture; and shifting funding to more effective and upstream services and supports. Recommendations in relation to mental health nursing workforce included: - improving research capacity - improve supply, productivity and access for mental health nurses and the mental health peer workforce - improve access to mental health care nursing in a community context - improve education and training of the mental health and associated workforce to deploy evidence-based treatment - evidence-based approaches on mental health and well-being to be adopted in early childhood worker and teacher training and continuing professional development

Several themes emerge when looking at these recommendations.
- national standards on mental health care and treatment
- natonal standards on levels of patient care and staffing
- more support for community based mental health care nursing
- national strategy to encourage retention of mental health nurses
- national review of mental health education and training systems
- a national standard for mental health nursing education and training
- more support for tertiary based mental health nursing and education and training
- more support for mental health care professional development for nurses
- more support for professional development for mental health nurses
- strengthen the role of peak body organisations
- grearter promotion of community based mental health nursing and mental health care
- greater promotion of the role of mental health nursing and in mental health care