



Australian Divisions of **General Practice**

National Practice Nurse Workforce Survey Report

April 2006



Promoting community health and wellbeing through Divisions of General Practice and primary health care teams



Australian Divisions of **General Practice**

ADGP is the largest representative voices for general practice in Australia. It is the peak national body of the divisions of general practice, comprising 118 divisions across Australia, as well as the eight state-based organisations. Approximately 95 per cent of GPs are members of a local division of general practice.

Australian Divisions of General Practice

PO Box 4308

MANUKA ACT 2603

Telephone: 02 6228 0800

Facsimile: 02 6228 0899

Email: adgpreception@adgp.com.au

Web: www.adgp.com.au

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing

Acknowledgements

The survey instrument and survey report were prepared by Julie Porritt Principal Adviser, Nursing in General Practice and Rachel Yates Senior Policy Adviser ADGP with assistance from other ADGP staff members. Statistical analysis of the survey results was performed by Covance Ltd.

ADGP would like to acknowledge the assistance of the state-based organisations (SBOs) for their support in circulating the survey instrument to their member divisions and for promoting the survey.

Particular thanks are extended to the Divisions of General Practice for their assistance in administering the survey, and to the many general practice staff and practice nurses who took the time to respond.

List of abbreviations

ADGP	Australian Divisions of General Practice Limited
ANU	Australian National University
Division	Division of General Practice
FTE	Full time equivalent
GP	General practitioner
MBS	Medical Benefits Scheme
NiGP	Nursing in General Practice
PIP	Practice Incentives Program
PN	Practice nurse
RRMA	Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas
SBO	State-based organisation
SD	Standard deviation

National Practice Nurse Workforce Survey 2005

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	3
List of abbreviations	4
1. Executive Summary	7
Main findings.....	7
2. Introduction	8
3. Method	9
3.1 Survey questionnaire	9
3.2 Population and distribution method.....	9
3.3 Statistical Clearing House approval	10
3.4 Data quality and statistical analysis	10
4. Scope	10
5. Nursing in General Practice Survey Responses	10
5.1 Divisions	10
5.2 Practices	11
5.3 General practitioners.....	12
5.4 Practice nurses.....	12
6. Synopsis of key findings	13
6.1 Estimate of number of practice nurses employed in Australia (headcount)	13
6.2 Number of practices employing a practice nurse.	14
6.3 GP:PN ratio.....	14
6.4 Practice data.....	15
6.5 Practice nurse data	16
7. Detailed overview	17
7.1 General practice data	17
7.2 Practice nurse data	19
8. The Future	23
Appendix 1	25
Survey Instrument.....	25

List of tables

Table 1: Divisional survey responses state.....	10
Table 2: Number of practices returning surveys by state	11
Table 3: Number of practices returning surveys by RRMA category	11
Table 7: Number of practices registered for Practice Incentives Payment (PIP).....	15
Table 8: Number of practices eligible for Practice Nurse PIP	15
Table 9: Number of nurses who completed an Individual Practice Nurse Survey by Nurse Category 2005	16
Table 10: Number of practices obtaining contract or sessional nursing services.....	19
Table 11: Total number of contract or sessional nursing hours per week in general practice	19
Table 13: Length of service for nurses working in general practice in 2005	20
Table 14: Number of Practice Nurses employed in another nursing position	21
Table 15: Membership of practice nurses to professional nursing organisations.....	21
Table 16: Postgraduate qualifications held by practice nurses	22

List of figures

Figure 1: RRMA distribution of practices responding to the surveys: 2005 and 2003	11
Figure 2: RRMA distribution of practice nurses responding to the survey	13
Figure 3: Number of practice nurses employed per practice	15
Figure 4: Total number of practices that participated in the survey by state and by year...	17
Figure 5: Number of Practice Nurses employed by practices responding to the survey by year and by state.....	18
Figure 6: Age distribution of practice nurses 2003 and 2005.....	20

1. Executive Summary

The Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd (ADGP) identifies practice nurses as core members of general practice teams for the future¹. Our organisation provides national leadership and coordination for the Nursing in General Practice Program involving all state-based organisations (SBOs) and Divisions of General Practice. The key aims of the program are to support general practices to recruit and retain practice nurses, and to provide education and professional development opportunities for practice nurses.

Towards the end of 2005, ADGP undertook a national workforce survey of nurses working in general practice. The survey was administered by Divisions of General Practice with their local practices and was a repeat of the ADGP National Practice Nurse Workforce Survey first undertaken in 2003. Currently there is no source of national information and statistics regarding the nursing in general practice workforce other than these surveys undertaken by ADGP.

The information provided presents a comprehensive picture of the features of the practice nursing workforce and an analysis of trends over recent years.

Main findings

- The estimated number of practice nurses (headcount) employed across Australia in 2005 is 4924. This compares to an estimate of 4000 practice nurses in 2003 and represents a 23% increase in two years.
- It is estimated that 57% of general practices in Australia employ one or more practice nurses, a 17% increase since 2003.
- In practices that employ a nurse the current GP to PN ratio is 2.5:1(headcount) or 3.3:1 full time equivalent (FTE).
- 82% of practice nurses are registered nurses, while 18% are enrolled nurses.
- Consistent with the nursing profession as a whole practice nurses are an ageing workforce with 78% over the age of 40 years.
- Although the practice nursing workforce remains predominately a part time workforce with 82% of practice nurses working part time, there has been a 4% increase in the number of practice nurses working full time since 2003.
- 32.4% of the practice nurse workforce are employed in other nursing jobs which may be reflective of the part time nature of many positions available in general practice.
- Of those practices responding to the survey who currently employ a practice nurse 57% are in Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) 3-7 and 43% are in RRMA 1-2.

¹ Australian Divisions of General Practice, 2005. Primary Health Care Position Statement. ADGP. ACT.

2. Introduction

The Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd. (ADGP) is the peak national body for the Divisions Network which comprises 118 Divisions of General Practice and eight state-based organisations (SBOs) across Australia. Through the Network, ADGP has contact with the majority of general practices and GPs as well as with many other health professionals and the health system. Approximately 95 per cent of GPs are members of a local division.

Nurses have been employed in Australian general practices for a number of decades. Over the last five years however, there has been an even greater focus on the valuable and diverse roles that nurses can play in supporting GPs in the provision of primary care services. Australian Government policy has been a significant driver for the employment of more nurses in general practice over this period, and for the development of the clinical role for the nurse particularly in the management of chronic disease. The aims for the Government's Nursing in General Practice Initiative are to support the effective employment of practice nurses to:

- relieve workforce pressure in general practice
- improve the prevention and management of chronic disease
- improve access to, and the quality and integration of, patient care.²

To achieve these aims the Australian Government has made a significant financial commitment to practice nursing providing funding of \$104.3 million in the years 2001-2005, and a further \$129.7 million for 2005-2009. The majority of the funding is provided for the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) for grants to practices in rural areas and other areas of need to employ practice nurses.

There has also been a range of other Australian Government initiatives aimed at increased utilisation of practice nursing services, such as:

- MBS Items for practice nurses to provide immunisation, wound care and Pap smears on behalf of a general practitioner.
- The Enhanced Primary Care Program and the new Medicare Chronic Disease Management Items which include provision for a GP to be assisted by a practice nurse to manage the health care of patients with chronic medical conditions, including patients needing multidisciplinary care.
- Practice nurse scholarships for immunisation, wound management and cervical screening.²
- The proposed introduction of a new Medicare item for a midwife, nurse or accredited Aboriginal Health Worker to provide antenatal checks for pregnant women in rural areas, on behalf of a GP or specialist.
- A commitment to facilitate access to training and support for nurses in regional and rural areas to be points of referral for people experiencing domestic violence.

ADGP is contracted by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing to provide national leadership and coordination for the Nursing in General Practice (NiGP)

² Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2005. *Guidelines for the Divisions Network Nursing in General Practice Program*. Draft for comment. Version 0.2.

Program. The aim of the program is to work with the state-based organisations to achieve the following national initiatives:

- building the capacity of Divisions of General Practice to deliver support services for nursing in general practice, in particular to recruit and retain practice nurses in general practice.
- brokering, coordinating and funding education and professional development opportunities for nurses in general practice in collaboration with Divisions of General Practice in each state and territory.

This work is directed by the Principal Policy Adviser for Nursing in General Practice through the Nursing in General Practice Program – one of ADGP’s major programs.

In late 2003 ADGP, with the assistance of divisions, undertook the first national survey of practice nurses in order to collect comprehensive national and state / territory data on the current nursing in general practice workforce in Australia. Prior to 2003 no such comprehensive, national data was available on this specific branch of the nursing profession.

Late in 2005, the survey was repeated to further examine patterns in nursing in general practice over the previous two years. This report outlines the findings from the 2005 survey and compares these findings with the 2003 results where relevant.

3. Method

3.1 Survey questionnaire

The survey instrument developed by ADGP for the 2003 survey was again used with minor modifications to five questions, as requested by the Australian Government Statistical Clearing House, and consisted of three parts:

- a Division Cover Sheet (11 questions), to collect Divisional data
- a Practice Survey (6 questions) to collect practice information
- an Individual Nurse Survey (8 questions) for each nurse employed in the practice.

A copy of the Survey instrument can be found in Appendix 1.

3.2 Population and distribution method

The target population for the survey was all general practices in Australia. Surveys were distributed to all 118 Divisions of General Practice who were then requested to administer the survey to practices in their region. Completed surveys were collected by divisions and returned to ADGP five weeks after distribution. Late returns were followed up by email from ADGP through the SBOs to divisions. As with the 2003 survey, divisions were given the option of administering the survey in the manner they believed most appropriate for their general practices and that would elicit the most accurate and complete responses. Methods of distribution utilised included fax out, hand delivery and telephone interviews or a combination of these methods.

3.3 Statistical Clearing House approval

The survey was approved for use by the Australian Government Statistical Clearing House.

3.4 Data quality and statistical analysis

Responses were entered into a Microsoft Access database and electronic entries were systematically checked against hard copy responses for any anomalies or entry errors. Cleaned data were analysed by a statistics company Covance Pty Ltd using SAS version 8.2.

4. Scope

The survey instrument was developed to provide a quantitative snapshot of the practice nurse workforce. Questions on the roles of practice nurses did not form part of this study. This information is available from other recently completed work such as *General Practice Nursing in Australia*³. The factors that influence the role for practice nurses are being examined in the current Australian General Practice Nurses study jointly led by ADGP and the Australian National University (ANU).

5. Nursing in General Practice Survey Responses

5.1 Divisions

Responses were received from 109 divisions giving an overall divisional response rate of 92%. Of these divisions, 79% (94) responded in full to the survey. This is an increase on the 2003 survey in which 70% (84) of divisions responded. A further 12.6% (15) divisions sent in partial responses⁴ and 8.4% (10) did not respond. A state by state breakdown of these responses is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Divisional survey responses state

		Full response	Partial response	Total (%)
ACT	1	100% (1)	-	100%
QLD	18	83% (15)	6% (1)	89%
NSW	37	62% (23)	27% (10)	89%
NT	2	100% (2)	-	100%
SA	14	64% (9)	7% (1)	71%
TAS	3	100% (3)	-	100%
VIC	30	90% (27)	10% (3)	100%
WA	14	100% (14)	-	100%
Total	119	79% (94)	13% (15)	92%

³ Watts. I, Foley E, Hutchinson R, Pascoe T, Whitecross L, Snowdon T, 2003. *General Practice Nursing in Australia*. Royal College of General Practitioners and Royal College of Nursing Australia.

⁴ A partial response included basic information sent in from Divisions on number of practices and practice nurses in the Division.

5.2 Practices

The total number of practices returning survey responses in 2005 was 1682. A state by state breakdown of number of practice responses is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of practices returning surveys by state

State								
NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total
289	559	366	114	225	73	26	30	1682

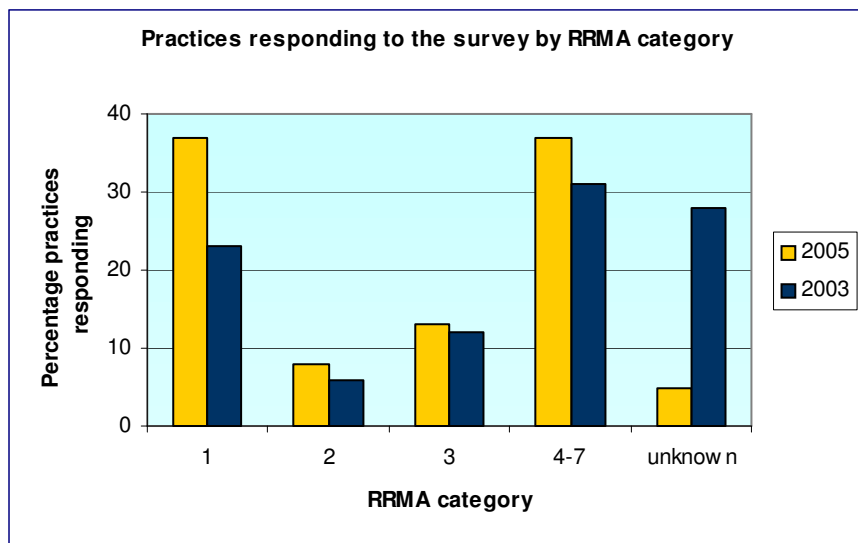
The geographic distribution of practices responding to the survey is given by Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Classification (RRMA) in Table 3.

Table 3: Number of practices returning surveys by RRMA category

RRMA	Number	Per cent
1	424	37.46
2	87	7.69
3	147	12.99
4	104	9.19
5	245	21.64
6	38	3.36
7	34	3.00
Urban Unknown	18	1.59
Rural Unknown	35	3.09
Total	1132	100.00

A comparison of the RRMA distribution of practices responding to the 2005 and 2003 surveys is provided in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: RRMA distribution of practices responding to the surveys: 2005 and 2003



5.3 General practitioners

The total number of GPs (headcount) on which this response is based is 7251, which equates to 5271.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) GPs (where FTE is defined as working nine or more sessions per week). The mean number of GPs (headcount) per practice indicated by survey responses is 4.31 (Standard Deviation (SD) = 3.2), with mean number of FTE GPs per practice being 3.14 (SD = 2.38).

5.4 Practice nurses

The total number of detailed individual practice nurse responses received to the survey was 2463 (headcount). The overall response rate from individual practice nurses, from practices that participated in the survey, was 84%.

Survey responses equate to 1604.6 FTE nurses where an FTE nurse is defined as working 38 hours per week. Based on the practice survey responses, the mean number of practice nurses (headcount) per practice was 1.74 (SD = 1.66) and the mean number of FTE practice nurses per practice was 0.95 (SD = 0.93).

The geographic distribution of practice nurses by state and by RRMA is given in the tables below.

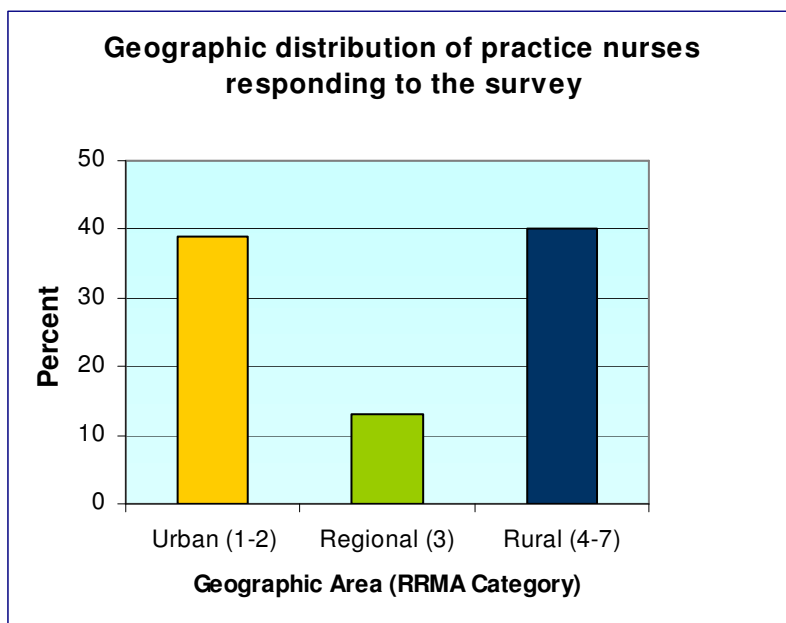
Table 4A: Number of Practice Nurses responding to the survey by state

NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total
464	713	523	161	420	114	37	31	2463

Table 4B: Number of practice nurses by RRMA Classification

RRMA	No PNs Employed	Per cent
1	648	31.17
2	178	8.56
3	269	12.94
4	253	12.17
5	503	24.19
6	65	3.13
7	57	2.74
Urban Unknown	33	1.59
Rural Unknown	73	3.51
Total nurses responding to questions	2079	100.00

Figure 2: RRMA distribution of practice nurses



6. Synopsis of key findings

6.1 Estimate of number of practice nurses employed in Australia (headcount)

The overall estimate of number of practice nurses (headcount) employed in Australia at the time of the survey is between 4510 and 4924. The lower limit is based only on the 109 responding divisions, whilst the upper limit takes into account the estimated number of practice nurses in the ten non-responding divisions. In 2003, this estimate was between 3500 - 4,000 nurses. An estimate of the number of nurses employed per state in 2005, based on information from responding divisions only, is given in Table 5.

Table 5: State by state estimate of number of practice nurses employed

Overall estimate of number of practice nurses	
State	
NSW	1157
VIC	1395
QLD	932
SA	203
WA	611
TAS	126
NT	56
ACT	30
Total	4510

6.2 Number of practices employing a practice nurse.

Of the 1682 practices returning a survey response, 76.5% (1286) employ a practice nurse. Given the nature of the survey however, this is likely to be an overrepresentation of the actual number of practices employing a practice nurse in Australia. A better estimate of this number is based on information provided in the survey which takes into account the number of practices with practice nurses in *all* practices within a division (and not just those responding to the survey). This data suggests that about 57% of practices in Australia currently employ practice nurses. A state by state breakdown of this information is provided below.

Table 6: Estimated number of nurses employed by practices in Australia by state

State	No. of PNs	No. of Practices	Per cent
NSW	611	1195	51.1
VIC	691	1190	58.1
QLD	456	671	68.0
SA	156	186	83.9
WA	308	576	53.5
TAS	105	129	81.4
NT	25	45	55.6
ACT	22	120	18.3
Australia	2374	4112⁵	57.7

6.3 GP:PN ratio

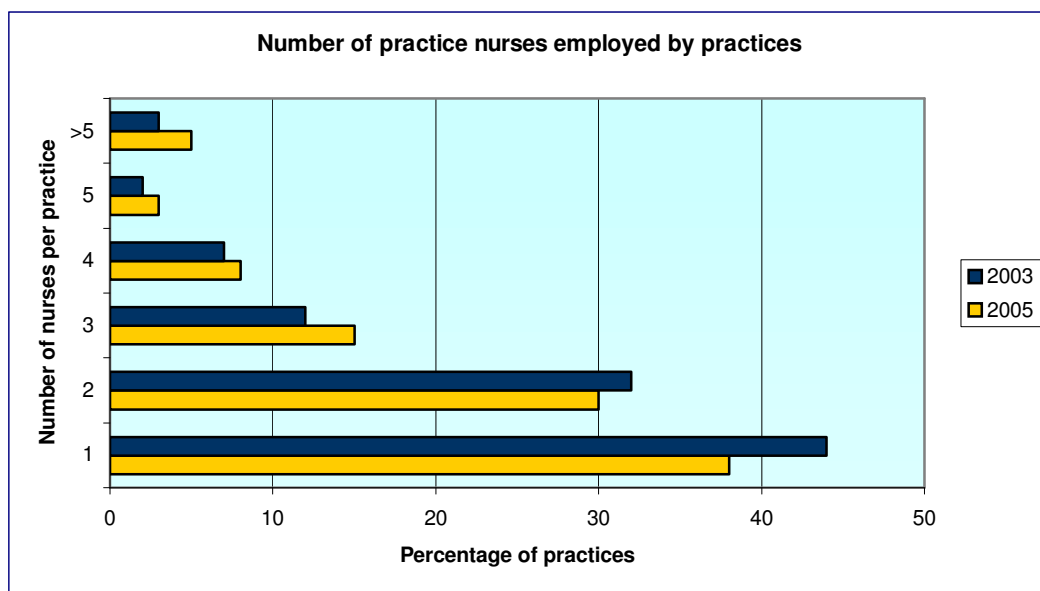
Analysis of the 2005 survey data suggest that the current GP to PN ratio is 2.5 GPs to 1 PN (headcount) and 3.3 FTE GPs to every 1 FTE PN.

⁵ This figure represents the total number of practices for which information was provided on number of practice nurses employed.

6.4 Practice data

Of the 1682 practices responding to the survey, 38% employ only one nurse, and 5% employ more than 5 nurses. A breakdown of the number of nurses employed by practices per general practice is provided in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Number of practice nurses employed per practice



76.5% of the practices responding to the survey employ a practice nurse. However not all of the responding practices with a practice nurse are registered for the Practice Incentive Program (PIP) or are eligible for the Practice Nurse PIP.

Table 7: Number of practices registered for Practice Incentives Payment (PIP)

Registered for PIP	Number	Per cent
Yes	1427	88.30
No	154	9.53
Unsure	35	2.17
Total	1616	100.00

Table 8: Number of practices eligible for Practice Nurse PIP

Eligible for PN PIP	Number	Per cent
Yes	998	61.60
No	417	25.74
Unsure	205	12.65
Total	1620	100.00

6.5 Practice nurse data

Nurses were asked to indicate if they were registered or enrolled nurses. In 2005 the majority of practice nurses are registered nurses (82%) with the remainder of the general practice nursing workforce consisting of enrolled nurses (18%). This is similar to the 2003 results of 84% registered nurses and 16% enrolled nurses. The following table shows the state by state breakdown of registered and enrolled practice nurses as indicated from individual nurses responses. These results are again very similar to those of the 2003 survey with the exception of the NT whose 2003 results showed 78.9% registered nurses and 21.1% enrolled nurses (compared to 86.1 % and 13.9% respectively in 2005).

Table 9: Number of nurses who completed an Individual Practice Nurse Survey by Nurse Category 2005

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total
Registered Nurse	393 (90.8%)	570 (80.9%)	433 (85.1%)	108 (72.5%)	311 (76.0%)	85 (75.9%)	31 (86.1%)	28 (90.3%)	1959 (82.2%)
Enrolled Nurse	40 (9.2%)	135 (19.1%)	76 (14.9%)	41 (27.5%)	98 (24.0%)	27 (24.1%)	5 (13.9%)	3 (9.7%)	425 (17.85)
Total responses	433	705	509	149	409	112	36	31	2384

The following excerpt is from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's *Nursing Labour Force 2002* report:

'Nurses are classified into two broad categories: registered nurses, who make up the majority of all nurses, and enrolled nurses. The minimum educational requirement for a registered nurse is a 3-year degree from a tertiary institution or the equivalent from a recognised hospital-based program. The minimum educational requirement for an enrolled nurse is a 1-year diploma from a vocational educational and training institution (VET) or equivalent from a recognised hospital-based program. Although the level of expertise varies within these groups, in general registered nurses perform more complex medical procedures and hold more responsibility than do enrolled nurses'. Enrolled nurses are required to be supervised and directed by a registered nurse.

There are very few male nurses employed in general practice making up less than 2% of the total nursing workforce.

Consistent with Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's *Nursing Labour Force 2002* report (of the national nursing profession), practice nurses are an ageing workforce. There are few younger nurses entering the profession, with 78% of the current practice nurse workforce over the age of 40 years (Figure 6).

Over the past five years there have been several factors that have impacted on general practice nursing:

- the Australian Government Initiatives aimed at supporting practices to employ and utilise a practice nurse as outlined in the introduction
- the provision of practice nurse support programs by the Divisions of General Practice
 - these programs have provided the nurses with opportunities for networking and support and increased access to ongoing education and training
 - the programs have also supported general practice in the recruitment, retention and employment of nurses
- an increased focus on practice nursing in this country over the past five years that has highlighted the valuable role that nurses can play in supporting the general practitioner in the provision of health services to patients. This position has been supported by all of the key general practice and nursing organisations.

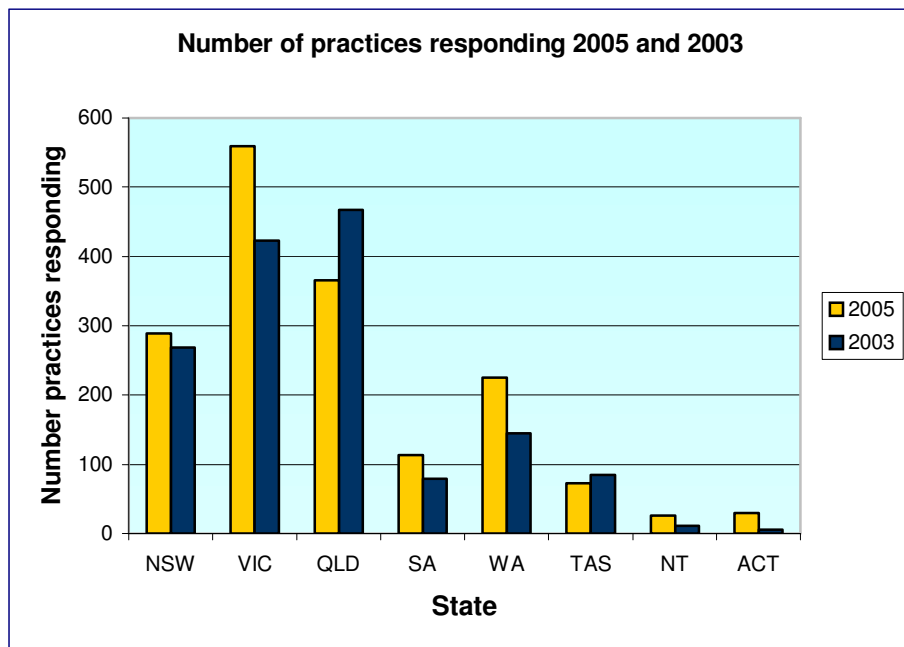
7. Detailed overview

7.1 General practice data

7.1.1 Number of general practices

The total number of practices returning survey responses was 1682 - an increase from the 2003 survey. Figure 4 shows the total number of practices per state that completed a survey in 2005 and 2003.

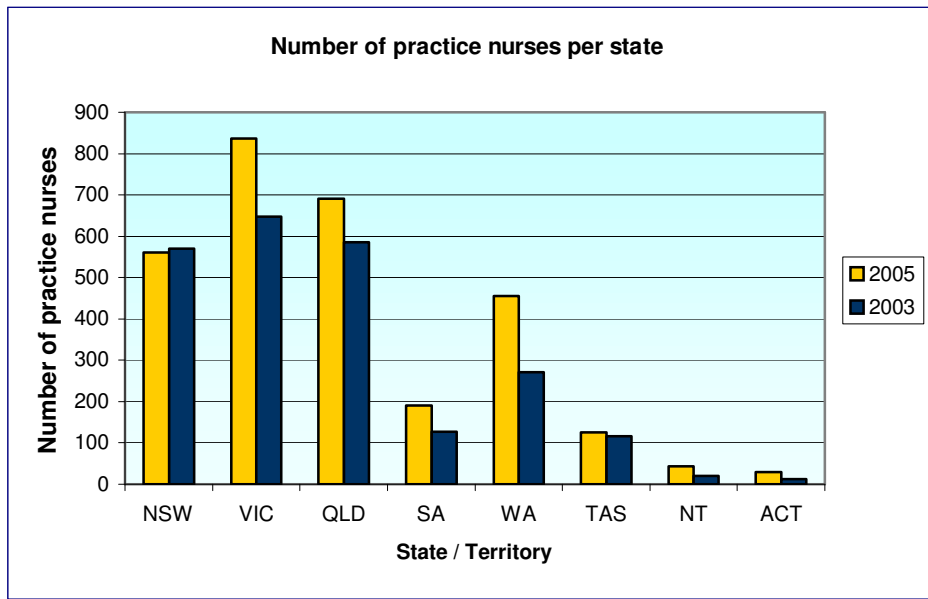
Figure 4: Total number of practices that participated in the survey by state and by year



7.1.2 Number of practice nurses employed by practices responding to the survey

Practices were asked to report the number nurses employed at the practice (headcount). In 2005, a total of 2934 practice nurses were employed across the 1682 practices responding to the survey. (In 2003, 2349 practice nurses were employed across the 1485 practices that participated in the survey.) A comparison of these figures by year and by state is provided in the Figure below.

Figure 5: Number of Practice Nurses employed by practices responding to the survey by year and by state



7.1.3 Other nursing services

Some practices receive nursing services on a contract or sessional basis from another organisation. This may be in addition to employing a nurse at the practice, or may be an alternative for direct employment of a nurse for the practice.

183 of the responding practices receive nursing services on a contract or sessional basis in addition to the employed practice nurse hours.

Overall the most common source for practices obtaining additional nursing services was from a private contractor, although there was some state by state variation.

Table 10: Number of practices obtaining contract or sessional nursing services

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total
Division of General Practice	14	7	17	7	2	5	1	0	53
Area Health Service	3	8	1	1	3	0	0	0	16
Private Contractor	12	31	12	10	9	3	0	1	78
Pharmaceutical Company	6	6	3	4	3	0	0	0	22
Other	4	12	4	2	3	2	0	0	27
Total no. practices obtaining at least 1 contract or sessional nurse	33	58	37	23	20	10	1	1	183

Table 11: Total number of contract or sessional nursing hours per week in general practice

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total
Division of General Practice	89	23	74	17	5	16	0	0	224
Area Health Service	9	37	0	14	55	0	0	0	115
Private Contractor	58	136	72	98	69	10	0	0	443
Pharmaceutical Company	6	20	4	0	0	0	0	0	30
Other hours	2	84	88	9	22	24	0	0	229
Total hours per week	164	300	238	138	151	50	0	0	1041

7.2 Practice nurse data

7.2.1 Demographics

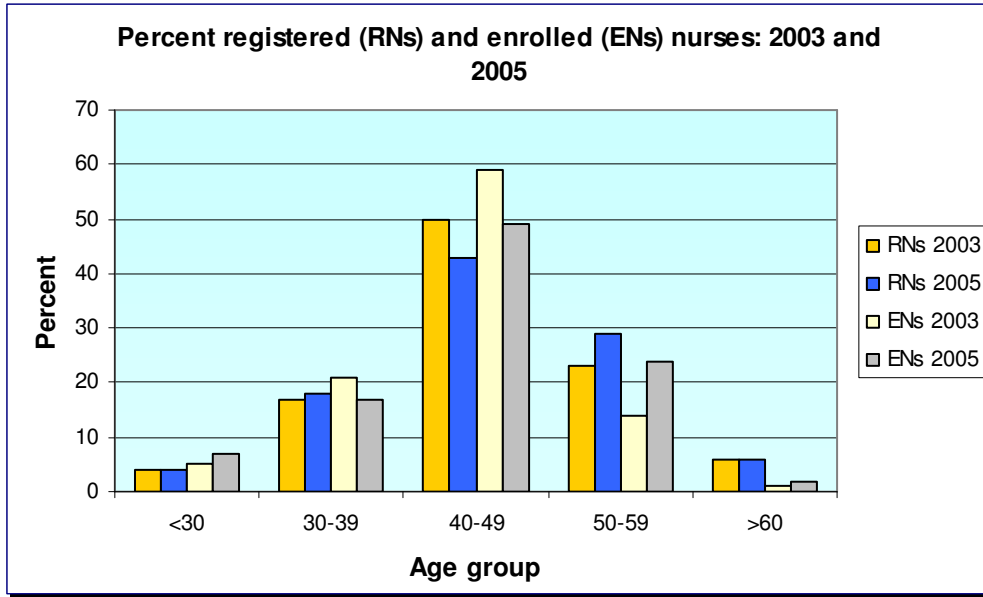
Age

Consistent with the nursing profession as a whole, practice nurses are an ageing workforce, with 78% of the current practice nurse workforce over the age of 40 years.

Table 12: Age of nurses employed in general practice

Age of nurses employed in general practice			
Age group	Registered Nurse (%)	Enrolled Nurse (%)	Total
<30	4.02	7.14	4.57
30-39	17.77	17.38	17.70
40-49	42.97	49.05	44.05
50-59	29.06	24.29	28.21
60+	6.18	2.14	5.46

Figure 6: Age distribution of practice nurses 2003 and 2005



Sex

The majority (99%) of practice nurses are female. Very few male nurses (less than 2%) are employed in this setting. This is below the national percentage of 6%.

7.2.2 Hours worked

In 2005, 82.1% of the nurses employed in practices responding to the survey work part time (compared to 87% in 2003) and 17.9% work full time at the practice (compared to 13% in 2003). The practice nursing workforce is still predominantly a part time workforce, but slightly more are working full time in 2005.

7.2.3 Length of service of nurses in general practice

In 2003, the length of service for nurses employed in the general practice showed that almost one third of nurses had been employed in general practice for less than two years. However, in 2005, this picture is changing somewhat with now only 23% of the workforce having been employed for less than two years and 77% remaining in the workforce for over two years.

Table 13: Length of service for nurses working in general practice in 2005

Length of PN service	Number	Per cent
0-1 yr	516	21.67
1-2 yr	35	1.47
2-5 yr	865	36.33
6-10 yr	438	18.40
11-20 yr	333	13.99
20+ yr	194	8.15

7.2.4 Patterns of employment

Similar to the 2003 survey results, 32.4% (797) of the practice nurse survey respondents indicated that they are employed in at least one other nursing job. This may be due to the largely part-time nature of many of the positions available in general practice.

Table 14: Number of Practice Nurses employed in another nursing position

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total
Public Hospital	60	120	74	20	45	18	3	3	343
Private Hospital	17	30	32	3	19	3	1	1	106
Aged Care Facility	17	32	16	4	10	8	0	0	87
Another General Practice	23	32	26	5	23	5	1	2	117
Other Organisation ⁶	40	82	38	12	47	12	3	3	237
Total Number nurses employed in 1 or more other organisation(s)	141	266	164	38	132	40	8	8	797
Total No. of practice nurse responses	464	713	523	161	420	114	37	31	2463

7.2.5 Membership of a professional nursing organisation

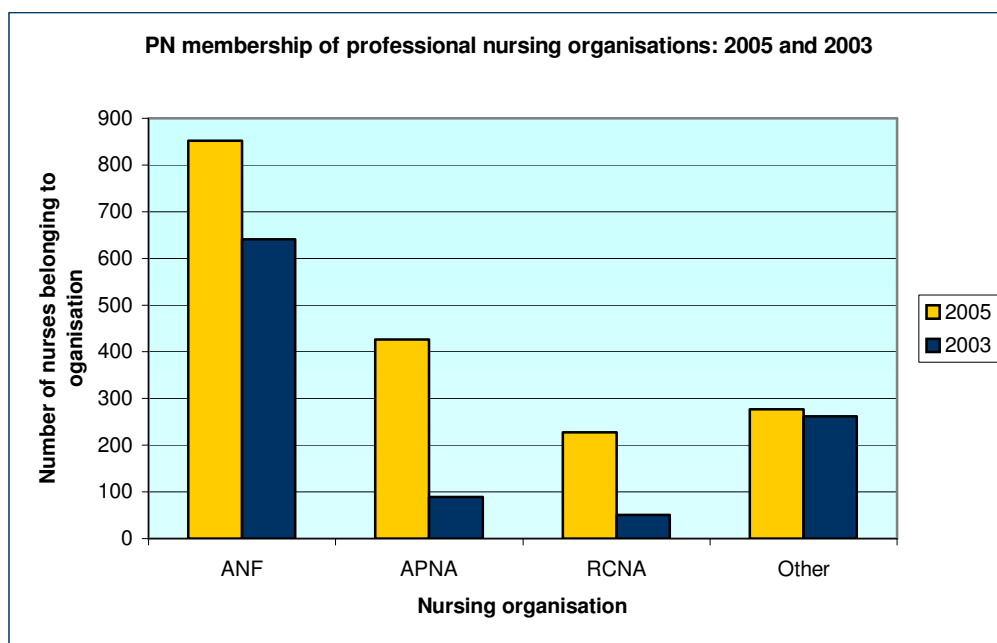
Table 15: Membership of practice nurses to professional nursing organisations

	Total	Per cent
Member of Professional Nursing Organisation	1444	60.6
Royal College of Nursing Australia	228	9.6
The College of Nursing (NSW)	81	3.4
Australian Nursing Federation (or a state branch)	852	35.7
Australian Practice Nurses Association	427	17.9
Association for Australian Rural Nurses	9	0.4
Australian Diabetes Educators Association	38	1.6
Other Organisation	277	11.6

⁶ The most commonly reported nursing positions in the 'other organisation' category were community health (45), local government council (20), nursing agency (19), university or TAFE (19), after hours GP clinic (7) and prison or Department of Justice (6).

In 2005 60.6% of practice nurses reported that they were members of a professional nursing organisation compared to only 43% reporting such membership in 2003. As in the previous survey, the most frequently reported membership was to the Australian Nursing Federation.

Figure 7: Membership of professional nursing organisations: 2005 and 2003



7.2.6 Post graduate qualifications in nursing

52.9% of practice nurses reported that they held an additional post graduate nursing qualification. The most frequently reported qualifications were accredited nurse immuniser (21.8%), midwifery (17.9%) and asthma educator (6.6%). This compares to the following results in 2003: midwifery (19%), accredited nurse immuniser (9%), and asthma educator (3%).

Table 16: Postgraduate qualifications held by practice nurses

	Number	Per cent
Accredited Nurse Immuniser	536	21.76
Midwifery	441	17.90
Asthma Educator	162	6.58
Women’s Health Nurse	114	4.63
Emergency Nursing	99	4.02
Diabetes Educator	98	3.98
Intensive Care Nursing	75	3.05
Other Qualification	439	17.82
Total Number of Nurses with at least 1 additional qualification	1302	52.86

7.2.7 Additional comments

Practice nurses were given the option of providing an additional comment. 212 or 8.9% of practice nurse respondents provided an additional comment. Most comments provided information on the postgraduate qualifications, or education and training undertaken by the nurse. Even though the survey included a question requesting information about postgraduate qualifications practice nurses were keen to provide further specific details about this. The information provided demonstrated the vast range of clinical skills amongst practice nurses.

The most commonly reported areas of clinical expertise (not reported as part of Q 8) were child and family health (10), palliative care (8), women's health (8), paediatrics (7), preoperative nursing (7), coronary care (6), mental health (6), and gerontology (4). Twelve nurses identified as having formal postgraduate qualifications in a nursing speciality area.

Another common comment was concern about the low rates of pay in general practice in comparison with other nursing jobs. Some quoted rates of pay of \$20 per hour, whilst another made comment about receiving \$10 per hour less in general practice compared to a second nursing job.

8. The Future

It is widely acknowledged that practice nurses can bring a number of benefits to a general practice. These include improved health outcomes in chronic disease⁷, assistance in primary-acute care integration, better coordination of care, increased workforce capacity, the provision of practical and professional support to GPs and an enhancement in the range of services available to people attending general practice⁸. The ADGP Primary Health Care Position Statement identifies practice nurses as core members of general practice teams of the future.

These survey results reflect the increasing trend for more practices to employ a practice nurse. The Australian Government Nursing in General Practice Initiative administered by the Divisions of General Practice Network aims to continue to support additional general practices to recruit and retain practice nurses, and to maximise the contribution of all practice nurses to quality primary care services.

Further information can be obtained from Julie Porritt, Principal Adviser for Nursing in General Practice, Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd email: jporritt@adgp.com.au phone (02) 6228 0800.

⁷ Wagner E, Austin B and Von Korff M. Organising Care for Patients with Chronic Illness. *The Millbank Quarterly* 1996;74:511-534.

⁸ Watts I, Foley E, Hutchinson R, Pascoe T, Whitecross L, Snowdon T, 2003. *General Practice Nursing in Australia*. Royal College of General Practitioners and Royal College of Nursing Australia.

Appendix 1

Survey Instrument

Nursing in General Practice Workforce Survey

Dear Executive Officer

The Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd (ADGP) in conjunction with your State Based Organisation is seeking your assistance in conducting a survey of nurses working in general practice. The aggregated data from the survey will be used to inform policy makers regarding workforce planning at State and National levels.

ADGP understands that the general practice workforce is constantly being surveyed for one purpose or another, and we do not wish to add to this burden unduly. Unfortunately, we do not have comprehensive data at the state or national level on the nursing in general practice workforce. ADGP is working with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in the hope that future workforce data for nurses in general practice will be captured as part of the national nursing workforce dataset.

Since 2001, the Australian Government has provided funding through federal budgets of \$234 million, to improve access to medical services by providing support to general practitioners particularly in rural areas and other areas of need, to employ practice nurses. The Divisions of General Practice play a key role in the provision of support programs to nurses in general practice, so it is important that we have accurate information on the makeup of this workforce.

This survey was first administered through divisions in 2003, and we had an excellent response rate at that time. The questions remain much the same with only slight modification for this second survey to ensure that we can provide you with comparisons against the 2003 data.

The survey has three parts, a Division Cover Sheet, Practice Survey and Individual Nurse Survey. Divisions may choose to administer the survey in the manner they believe will be most appropriate for their practices and practice nurses and will elicit the most accurate results.

Divisions are requested to return all survey responses to ADGP by Wednesday 14th December. All data received will be treated in confidence. Divisions will receive a collated report of their responses to compare with the State/Territory and National data. Individual divisions will not be identified in the national and state reports. State Based Organisations will receive a copy of each of their divisions individual reports. Individual practices and nurses will not be identified in any of the survey results.

The results of the survey will be collated by the ADGP and published in early 2006. If you would like further information please contact Julie Porritt, Principal Adviser for Nursing in General Practice, phone 02 6228 0820 or email jporritt@adgp.com.au

Yours sincerely



Kate Carnell
Chief Executive Officer



Division Cover Sheet

To be returned along with completed questionnaires by Wednesday 14th December 2005 to:

*Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd
PO Box 4308
Manuka ACT 2603*

Attention: Julie Porritt

Please mark return as "Confidential Survey Information"

Name of Division:

Division Number:

Name of Divisional returning officer:

Contact phone number:

Number of practices in the Division:

Number of Practices completing a return:

Of those practices who have not completed a return how many employ a practice nurse?

In total how many practice nurses are employed in the practices that have not completed a return?

Please indicate how your Division chose to administer the survey with practices:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Faxed to the practice/s
<input type="checkbox"/>	Practice visit
<input type="checkbox"/>	Telephone interview
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – please give details: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	Combination of above

How long did it take you to complete this questionnaire? _____ minutes

Thank you for taking the time to assist with this survey.



Australian Divisions of **General Practice**

Nursing in General Practice Workforce Survey

Practice Information Sheet

The Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd (ADGP) in conjunction with your Division is seeking your assistance in conducting a survey of nurses working in general practice. The aggregated data from the survey will be used to inform policy makers regarding workforce planning at state and national levels.

ADGP understands that the general practice workforce is constantly being surveyed for one purpose or another, and we do not wish to add to this burden unduly. Unfortunately, we do not have comprehensive data at the state or national level on the nursing in general practice workforce. ADGP is working with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in the hope that future workforce data for nurses in general practice will be captured as part of the national nursing workforce dataset.

This survey was first administered through Divisions in 2003, and we had an excellent response rate at that time. The questions remain much the same with only slight modification for this second survey to ensure that we can provide you with comparisons against the 2003 data.

The practice manager or their delegate is required to complete the Practice Survey. Each nurse employed in the practice should complete a copy of the Individual Practice Nurse Survey. All responses should be returned to your Division. Your Division will return all practice responses to ADGP who will enter the data into a database. Individual practices and nurses will not be identified in any of the survey results. All data received will be treated in confidence.

The results of the survey will be collated by the ADGP and published in a report in early 2006, presenting state/territory and national data. If you would like further information please contact your Division or Julie Porritt, Principal Adviser for Nursing in General Practice, phone 02 6228 0820 or email jporritt@adgp.com.au.



Nursing in General Practice Workforce Survey

Practice Survey

To be completed by the Practice Manager or their delegate

(Please note individual practices and people within the practice will not be identified in the survey results)

1. How many GPs work in your practice?

Number of full time GPs _____
 i.e. working 9 or more sessions per week at the practice -
 one session equals four hours _____

Number of part time GPs _____

Please indicate the number of sessions per week worked for each part time GP- one session equals four hours. Please attached an additional sheet if more than 8 part time GPs

No. of Sessions / Week

GP No 1	GP No 5
_____	_____
GP No 2	GP No 6
_____	_____
GP No 3	GP No 7
_____	_____
GP No 4	GP No 8
_____	_____

2. What is the Rural, Remote & Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) classification of the practice?

Your division can help with this if you don't know.

3. Is the practice registered for the Practice Incentives Program (PIP)?

Yes

No

Unsure

4. Is the practice eligible for the current PIP for nursing in general practice?

Yes

No

Unsure

5. How many practice nurses are employed by your practice?

Please **exclude** contract or sessional nurses as these are included in Q6

Number of full time nurses (ie) working 38 hours or more per week

Number of part time nurses



Please indicate the number of hours worked for each part time nurse. Please add an additional sheet if more than 6 part time nurses

No of Hours/week

Nurse No 1

Nurse No 4

Nurse No 2

Nurse No 5

Nurse No 3

Nurse No 6

6. Apart from the nurses listed above does your practice receive nursing services on a contract or sessional basis from another organisation such as a community health service or Division of General Practice?

Yes

No

Unsure

If YES please complete for each nurse:

Nurse No 1	Number of hours at the practice per week	Employing organisation Please tick	Type of Service Please tick
		Division of General Practice <input type="checkbox"/>	Asthma Education <input type="checkbox"/>
		Area Health Service <input type="checkbox"/>	Diabetes Education <input type="checkbox"/>
		Private Contractor <input type="checkbox"/>	Health Assessments <input type="checkbox"/>
		Pharmaceutical Company <input type="checkbox"/>	Generalist Services <input type="checkbox"/>
		Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>

Nurse No 2	Number of hours at the practice per week	Employing organisation Please tick	Type of Service Please tick
		Division of General Practice <input type="checkbox"/>	Asthma Education <input type="checkbox"/>
		Area Health Service <input type="checkbox"/>	Diabetes Education <input type="checkbox"/>
		Private Contractor <input type="checkbox"/>	Health Assessments <input type="checkbox"/>
		Pharmaceutical Company <input type="checkbox"/>	Generalist Services <input type="checkbox"/>
		Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>

Nurse No 2	Number of hours at the practice per week	Employing organisation Please tick	Type of Service Please tick
	<hr/>	Division of General Practice	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Area Health Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diabetes Education <input type="checkbox"/>
	Private Contractor	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health Assessments <input type="checkbox"/>
	Pharmaceutical Company	<input type="checkbox"/>	Generalist Services <input type="checkbox"/>
	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>

How long did it take you to complete this questionnaire? _____ minutes

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

In order to collect some demographic details please have each nurse employed by your practice complete the following short questionnaire (see over page). Please copy a separate survey for each nurse employed.

Please return the completed questionnaire to your Division.



Nursing in General Practice Workforce Survey

Individual Nurse Survey

(Please note individual practices and people within the practice will not be identified in the survey results)

1. Are you a Registered Nurse (Victoria Division One)?

Enrolled Nurse (Victoria Division Two)?

2. Sex

Female

Male

3. Are you employed Full time (38 hours or more per week) or Part time

4. Which age group do you belong to?

Under 30 years

30-39 years

40-49 years

50-59years

60 years and over

5. Are you employed as a nurse by any other organisation?

Yes

No

If YES please indicate which other organisation/s

Public hospital

- Private Hospital
- Aged care facility
- Another general practice
- Other (please state)

6. How long have you been employed as nurse in general practice?

- 0 – 1 year
- 2 – 5 years
- 6 – 10 years
- 11 – 20 years
- over 20 years

7. Are you a member of a professional nursing organisation?

- Yes
- No

If YES please tick. You may tick more than one box.

- Royal College of Nursing Australia
- The College of Nursing (NSW)
- Australian Nursing Federation (or a state branch)
- Australian Practice Nurses Association
- Association for Australian Rural Nurses
- Australian Diabetes Educators Association
- Other _____

8. Do you have additional qualifications in speciality areas of nursing?

Yes

No

If YES please tick

Midwifery

Diabetes Educator

Asthma Educator

Women's Health Nurse

Accredited Nurse Immuniser

Emergency Nursing

Intensive Care Nursing

Other

Additional Comments:

How long did it take you to complete this questionnaire? _____minutes

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

Please return the completed questionnaire to your Division.