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MEDIA RELEASE

Additional nursing places not the only solution - ATN

The ATN has welcomed the announcement by the Federal Opposition that it will increase the number of nursing places across Australia's universities.

The ATN group of universities teach more than 20 percent of Australia's nursing and midwifery students – making it the largest provider of nursing education in the country.

ATN Director, Vicki Thomson said the ALP proposal to deliver 1500 places over the next 2 years to universities is welcome but of itself would not solve the current nursing skills shortage. Both Government and Opposition have committed significant funding to increase nursing places.

The ATN said the critical issue is the availability and cost of clinical places.

"The problem our nursing schools face is primarily related to accessing quality clinical placements for undergraduate students. In particular, schools of nursing struggle to cover the costs associated with the clinical component of the course. These issues need to be dealt with.

"One possible solution to high clinical placement costs is for a policy direction which includes investing in simulated clinical teaching laboratories that would be available for the clinical education of all health professionals, including nurses, and that could act as an alternative to direct clinical placements. This approach, however, will require significant infrastructure funding.

While this is a significant first step, the ATN will be looking for policy that addresses the other barriers to increasing the number of nurses trained in Australia."

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