



NATIONAL MS NURSES STRATEGY

OUR ELECTION ASKS
FEDERAL ELECTION 2025

Improving access to life-changing MS Nurse care for people living with MS

MS Nurses are a highly cost-effective model of care. MS Nurse care reduces the need for other, more costly health professionals, such as GPs and neurologists and prevents unnecessary emergency department presentations and potentially, unplanned hospital admissions.

Currently one-third of Australians living with MS do not have access to life-changing MS Nurse care and have consistently worse health outcomes.

MS Australia in collaboration with the Menzies Institute for Medical Research and MS Nurses Australasia, is calling for the development and implementation of a National MS Nurses Strategy with an accompanying pilot project to co-design, implement and evaluate a best practice model of MS Nurse care.

At a cost of **\$4m over four years** a National MS Nurses Strategy would:

- ✓ Increase the number of MS Nurses across Australia and improve the nurse/patient ratio
- ✓ Improve education and training for the MS Nurse workforce
- ✓ Provide sustained employment and career opportunities for the existing MS Nurses workforce
- ✓ Determine a best practice cost-effective model of MS Nurse care
- ✓ Increase access to MS Nurses across Australia, including in regional, rural and remote regions
- ✓ Improve health outcomes for people living with MS and their family and carers

MS NURSING WORKFORCE

The current MS Nursing workforce is declining and the remaining nurses shoulder a high nurse/patient ratio. There is no consistent allocation of services for MS Nurses to patient numbers and need.

Current allocation of funding and positions is driven by individual hospitals and clinics, MS neurologist implementation, funding opportunities and individual business case requests. Many MS Nursing positions are part-time and/or contract/time-limited positions.

There is currently no formalised education or qualification for MS Nurses or well-defined career pathways, competency standards and scope of practice.

MS NURSES NATIONAL STRATEGY

MS Australia is calling for the development of a MS Nurses National Strategy at a cost of **\$1m over four years**.

The National Strategy would strengthen and expand the MS nursing workforce through:

- Establishing neurological nursing credentials in partnership with the Australian College of Nursing and recognition of the MS nursing specialisation
- Developing a clearly defined MS nursing career pathway
- Developing competency standards and a clear scope of practice for MS Nurses and MS Nurse practitioners
- Establishing a mentoring program for new and emerging MS Nurses
- Developing an education campaign for undergraduate and practicing nurses on the MS nursing specialisation
- Support for existing nurses looking to leave the profession to retrain as MS Nurses
- Support for MS Nurses to upgrade their qualifications to become MS Nurse practitioners

MS NURSE PILOT PROJECT

MS Australia is calling for the development of a pilot project in partnership with Menzies Institute for Medical Research and MS Nurses Australasia including:

- Co-design, implement and evaluate a best practice model of MS Nurse care (location TBD)
- Assess the impact of increasing the current level of MS Nurse care to ensure a best practice caseload for nurses and MS patients
- Evaluate the outcomes, so that other states and territories can apply the lessons learned during this project
- A cost-effectiveness assessment

We estimate this pilot project would cost **\$3m over four years** including:

- **\$1m** for the research and evaluation work undertaken by Menzies
- **\$2m** to fund additional FTE MS Nurse time

MS NURSE CARE IN AUSTRALIA REPORT

The MS Nurse Care in Australia Report developed by MS Australia in collaboration with the Menzies Institute for Medical Research and MS Nurses Australasia, found that one-third of Australians living with MS do not have access to life-changing MS Nurse care and have consistently worse health outcomes. The report also found that the number of MS Nurses is declining.

The report made the following recommendations:

- **Raise awareness** of the existence of MS Nurses, their value, and the supports and services they provide to people with MS and health practitioners
- **Assist the existing MS Nurse workforce** through mentorship and preceptorship, connecting and educating existing MS Nurses and exploring opportunities within university nursing courses to include education about MS Nursing and MS Research Nursing
- **Increase the number of MS Nurses** in Australia by targeted advocacy and assessing the current funding arrangements
- **Increase access to MS Nurses** through expanding telehealth services and advocacy to the Australian Government

MS Australia is Australia's national MS not-for-profit organisation that empowers researchers to identify ways to treat, prevent and cure MS, seeks sustained and systemic policy change via advocacy, and acts as the national champion for Australia's community of people affected by MS. MS Australia's Full Election Asks can be viewed at: msaustralia.org.au/election2025

MS Nurses Australasia Inc (MSNA) is the peak body for MS Nurses in the Southern Hemisphere, providing education and support for MS nurses and other health care professionals in Australia and New Zealand.

Menzies Institute for Medical Research's Multiple Sclerosis Research Flagship is a Flagship program of the University of Tasmania, College of Health and Medicine with a mission to perform high-quality, interdisciplinary, and consumer driven research on the causes, treatment and prevention of MS through an integrated pipeline of research.