

Nurses: The forgotten workforce

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A new national survey of nurses' attitudes highlights a profession that sees itself as overlooked by management and constantly suffocated by too much red tape.

With the federal election only days away and neither of the major parties announcing any major changes in [health policies](#), increasing numbers of [nurses](#) from all sectors of the profession are frustrated by heavy

workloads and lack of respect by senior management.

The survey by Monash University researchers Dr Belinda Allen, Associate Professor Peter Holland, and Dr Brian Cooper from the Department of Management, follows on from a previous survey conducted in 2011.

"In the two years since our first survey, it appears working conditions have not improved, and in fact, getting worse," Dr Allen said.

"More nurses than ever are contemplating leaving the profession due to heavy [workloads](#) and a lack of recognition and respect within their organisation. In 2011, 15 per cent indicated they would leave within the next twelve months; that has increased to 23 per cent.

"Workload issues have continued to increase, with the key reason indicated being inadequate nurse-to-patient ratios. This concern is widespread across the profession - it is not just limited to staff in hospitals but also in mental health and aged care."

Another major concern highlighted was the nurses' low levels of trust in senior management with close to half the respondents indicating that they did not feel confident that senior management would treat them fairly or could be trusted to make sensible decision in relation to their organisation's future.

"Many indicated senior management showed poor recognition and respect for nursing work, highlighted by the number of nurses being reduced first when [budget cuts](#) were required, thereby increasing the workload on the remaining staff," Dr Allen said.

In contrast, there were higher overall levels of trust in line management, with nearly 50 per cent of respondents expressing confidence their line

manager treated them fairly and understood their concerns.

Even with these figures, the survey found the two major reasons why respondents continued to work in nursing or midwifery was the belief it was important patients were properly cared for (91 per cent), and they liked the close personal connections they could develop with patients (68 per cent).

"Unless steps are taken by all levels of government to improve the working conditions, problems in relations to recruitment and retention of nurses will only worsen, thereby putting patient safety and care at risk," Dr Allen said.

Provided by Monash University

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