



COVID-19 temporary health surge workforce

June 2022 - This information is provided to assist third parties (such as health services, industry groups and peak bodies) to understand the health surge workforce recruitment platform.

What is happening?

On 22 January 2022 the Department of Health introduced a program in response to increasing health workforce staffing shortages due to the impact of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. The department is utilising both the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (Ahpra) Pandemic sub-register and the Ahpra General register to test the capacity of retired, semi-retired and under employed practitioners to boost workforce participation.

On 9 February 2022, the Department of Health commenced a six-week pilot, placing nurses from the Ahpra pandemic sub-register into residential aged care facilities (RACFs). The department is working with the Recruitment, Consulting and Staffing Association (RCSA) to place nurses into positions and determine the most effective way to mobilise nurses to assist RACFs experiencing sudden staff changes or workforce shortages.

From March, the pilot has been expanded to other parts of the sector (such as rural areas and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services) and will also consider targeting other health professions, in the coming winter months. The program will continue to operate over the winter months, where need is anticipated to be at its highest.

What is the response from sub-register nurses?

Response to the initial pilot has been relatively positive to date.

One third of nurses on the sub-register contacted (around 490 nurses) have indicated they are willing to participate in the surge workforce. Since commencement, results include:

- 33 nurses in the process of being placed with an employer
- 480 additional candidates on the recruitment platform waiting to be engaged

There have been some delays in placing candidates due to compliance requirements and police checks, given many have not been active in the workforce for some time.



What is the response from general register nurses?

The department has also reached out to nurses on the general register to see if any have additional capacity (such as nurses who are currently part time, or recently retired), to assist medical services experiencing staff shortages.

Communication has been disseminated through peak bodies directing nurses to an Expression of Interest (EOI) form on the Department of Health website.

As of 17 May 2022, more than 868 additional candidates have filled in the EOI. Of the EOIs received from nurses on the general register:

- around 396 have indicated they are willing to work in regional, rural, and remote areas, and
- 251 have indicated they are willing to work in a health service with predominately Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

These individuals have indicated they are available for placement in the coming weeks.

How can I access the temporary surge workforce?

The department has purchased licences for the RCSA recruitment platform on behalf of third parties wishing access candidates. If you wish to access additional workforce over the winter months, please email: surgeworkforce@health.gov.au.

If the department can assist with your workforce need, to access the platform through this program, your organisation will need to:

- agree to abide by service standards set out by RCSA - these incorporate a program specific Service Level Agreement (SLA) that outline expectations for placements, with regards to timely communication with candidates, and
- complete an online application form – once assessed, RCSA will work with your nominated contact to provide them with access to the platform and provide training on how to use it to search for your requirements.

Further information about the temporary surge workforce is available via the [Department of Health Website](#), including [Frequently Asked Questions](#).