

Make a choice. Make a difference. Nursing in Victoria.

health

Factsheet 2

Choosing a specialty

For nurses who want to specialise in one particular area of practice the choices are endless.

Nurses and midwives often have the opportunity to rotate through areas that interest them, or they can choose to specialise in one area.

Nurses and midwives who choose to work in specific areas for long periods build expert knowledge through experience. They can provide specialised care and use their knowledge to support and train others in the health care team.

Training

There is a wide range of postgraduate courses that can enhance your skills and knowledge to work in specialist areas.

Many Australian universities offer specialist courses, which are run in partnership with hospitals, health services and registered training organisations. TAFEs also offer a variety of short, health-related courses.

Nurses who want to specialise can choose to complete a graduate certificate or diploma in any number of areas, such as midwifery, aged care, critical care, mental health or rural and remote nursing.

Work settings

Hospitals offer a number of nursing opportunities that are not in wards, such as radiology, pathology, theatres, management, education, research and clinics.

Working in a community environment offers a wide variety of options for nurses looking for an alternative to hospitals. Community roles include working in community health services, district nursing, primary care, or working in industry or schools, or teaching in higher education sector.



Some of the areas you can specialise in include:

Critical care nursing

Critical care nursing includes areas like intensive care, cardiology, and trauma and emergency. It focuses on caring for patients who are in the acute phase of injury or illness such as after surgery, when they are suffering from burns or other trauma, or when their organs are failing.

Critical care nursing calls for complex assessment skills and a high level of care, and uses the latest monitoring and treatment technology. Critical care nurses work closely with all members of the critical care team and also provide emotional support to patients, families and friends.

It's fast, intense and complex, and can really stretch your nursing skills.

Aged care nursing

Aged care, or geriatric, nurses work in places such as hospitals, rehabilitation units, residential care facilities and community-based services and facilities.

Aged care nurses have well-developed knowledge and skills specific to older people in assessment, diagnosis, treatment and care coordination evaluation.

Aged care nurses who work in home or community settings have the opportunity to work independently, in partnership with families and local health care providers, or in small multidisciplinary teams. They are excellent communicators so they can advocate for their patients, coordinate multidisciplinary team members, and support family members, all of which are integral components of providing aged care.

In particular, working within residential aged care offers many opportunities for nurses to develop their clinical leadership and team leader skills.

Rural and remote nursing

Working in rural and regional health services has many advantages and opportunities including country living and connections within the community where you live and work.

Working in a smaller health service can provide more opportunities to branch out and stretch yourself.

For example, remote area nursing (RAN) is a challenging and expanded clinical role, with remote area nurses often working without immediate access to doctors. As well as providing comprehensive primary care services, they also provide a 24-hour, on-call emergency service to their communities that can include Aboriginal people, farmers, and mining and tourist populations.

Being a rural nurse requires a broad skill set, versatility and a willingness to give it a go.

Mental health nursing

Mental health nurses help their clients regain or improve their coping abilities, understand their mental illness and maintain their recovery.

Mental health nursing also includes implementing treatment, health education, case management, crisis intervention and counselling.

Further specialty areas within mental health nursing can include child, adolescent, adult, geriatric, substance abuse or eating disorders.

Mental health nurses work in a variety of places, such as hospitals, community-based or home-care programs, prisons, schools and local, state, and federal mental health agencies.

It's a challenging and exciting area of practice.

Midwifery

Midwives have a smorgasbord of career options in hospital and community settings. Midwives provide care for women throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period.

Different models of maternity care offer midwives a variety of working options, including one-to-one care with women (caseload), team midwifery, shared care with GPs, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care (including home visiting and breastfeeding support services).

Being a midwife is a special career that really makes a difference.

Want to know more?

For information about TAFE nursing and health-related courses visit

www.tafe.vic.gov.au

Or visit one of the university sites:

Australian Catholic University:

www.acu.edu.au

Monash University:

www.monash.edu.au

Deakin University:

www.deakin.edu.au

La Trobe University:

www.latrobe.edu.au

RMIT University:

www.rmit.edu.au

University of Ballarat:

www.ballarat.edu.au

Victoria University:

www.vu.edu.au

University of Melbourne:

www.unimelb.edu.au