In rural Australia ,workforce shortage is the major problem in the health care sectors and the rural population suffers poorer quality health care because of this shortage(Lim ,Bogossian & Ahern ,2010) .The main reasons for the workforce shortage in the remote areas of the Australia are infrastructural constraints like inadequate accommodation ,lack of communication facility ,shortage of water and electricity .Retirement of large proportion of nurses ,heavy work load ,prolonged working hours , and insufficient proportion of health professionals also the causes of imbalanced health work force .(Mohale ,Mulaudzi & Litt ,2008)It is noticeable that ,the shortage of workforce has a great influence on nurses in several ways . It affects their physical health, sleeping pattern, family relationship, emotional tensions and mental health of nurses. Moreover, professional nurses are struggled due to ethical challenges and faced legal issues due to the unavailability of health professionals. The scarcity of nurses also create problems to rural population .(Ulrich ,Taylor ,Soeken ,Patricia ,Farraa & Grady ,2010)However, Australian Government, employers and employees can easily solve this problems by implementing several scholarship programmes, conducting educational programmes, meeting the basic needs of their employees and by arranging flexible working environment in the rural settings .Employees can also resolve this problem by making them flexible to face the challenges in their nursing practise.(Harrison ,2007) This essay will discuss the common reasons of workforce shortage, its’ impact on nurses, legal and ethical issues and the solution of the inadequate proportion of nurses from the perspective of Government, employers and employees in the inner part of the Australia.

In Australia ,there are roughly 54,000 Registered nurses under 35 years of age and nearly 110,000 nurses over 45 years of age (AIHW ,2008).In each year a large proportion of nurses are retired from the health profession and the health care system has a great loss of well experienced ,knowledgeable and skilled nurses .As a result of this ,the Australian health care system are facing a drastic shortage of nurses in the health care system .(Lim et al ,2010)Moreover ,the working conditions in remote health care settings of Australia is unbearable due to the lack of supply of both material and human resources .Nurses have double and various role in the rural health settings .(Mohale et al,2008)Usually ,only one registered nurse is posted for duty with a nursing assistant and no other health professionals in most of the primary health care settings to provide care during both day and night .The whole major and minor health care deliveries are managed by a single qualified professional nurse and this contribute heavy workload and result in the poor performance of nurses .(Mohale et al,2008)

The registered nurse who work in the rural health care settings also experience infrastructural restraints, including lack of supply of basic necessities such as communication systems ,accommodation ,electricity and water .Inadequate accommodation is a usual problem in the inner part of the country and they have to share their room ,though they have members from their own family with them .(Mohale et al,2008)Furthermore ,they are frustrated due to the shortage of water when there is an emergency condition .Communication facilities is also very poor in the remote areas and due to this ,the professional nurses cannot manage the risky situations properly and often ,they cannot serve care effectively .Prolonged working hours and heavy work load also vigorous due to the shortage of nurses . (Donelan ,Buerhaus,DesRoches ,Dittus &Dutwin ,2008)

These unbearable working conditions in the rural health care settings have a great impact on nurse in different ways .In the remote health care settings ,registered nurses give care to a large number of clients every-day and they have to assess ,plan ,implement and evaluate treatment and conduct home visit .(Mohale et al ,2008)Due to the workforce shortage ,they sacrificed and worked long hours ,which contributed to fatigue ,stress and burnout . They also become psychologically depressed and they express different emotions like angry ,sad and fear .In certain situations, they are frustrated and feel hopeless .These type of uncomfortable working conditions force the nurse to leave the profession and they become jobless .Moreover ,imbalance in the staff ratios ,heavy workload , rocketing population ,poor maintenance of aseptic techniques and inadequate supply of drugs is led to an drastic improvement in the exploitation of personnel with fewer skills and decline in the quality of care offered .(mohale et al ,2008).In the communities ,professional nurses have to work 24hours and often they do not get time to care their family .As a result of this ,nurses feel separation from their family and it may affect the harmony of their family and life .(Mohale et a ,2008)Rural professional nurses also feel more stress due to the busy schedule of the profession .Over stress distress the sleeping pattern ,reduce the confidence ,increase the blood pressure and self-esteem and affect both the nurse and their functioning in the health care settings .It leads to the increased turnover ,decrease retention of nurses ,absenteeism and influence the provision of quality care .(Lim ,Bogossian & Ahern ,2010)

In addition ,nurses also face lots of legal and ethical issues due to staffing inadequacies in everyday nursing practise .It is difficult to follow the ethical principles of professional nursing practise because of the insufficient staffing pattern in the rural settings . Sometimes ,the new professionals address difficulties in decision making and they cannot do the advanced care planning without support .(Ulrich et al,2010)If the nurse cannot practise as per the standards of the nursing profession and wider health care system ,they will create legal and ethical issues and ,they will not be eligible to continue their practise . (ANMC,2008)

So they will be in highly stress and even they cannot meet the primary responsibilities of a professional nurse ,including protecting the clients’ rights and in maintaining the truthfulness in their practise .Often ,nurses cannot follow the aseptic techniques due to the limited availability of resources in the communities .(Ulrich et al,2010)According to Australian Nursing and Midwifery councils’(ANMC) first code of ethics ,nurses practise in a safe and competent manner(ANMC,2008) .If they do not follow the aseptic techniques in their practise ,they are creating hygienic issues among the client and they are breaching the code of ethics that a nurse to be followed in their profession .Moreover ,this professional misconduct create bodily harm to the client and they are punished due to criminal offence .(Staunton & Chiarella ,2010)Low staff ratio of nurses in the health care system will create a range of negative outcome to the rural population .It includes high mortality rate ,increased occurrence of ferocity against staff, high accident ratio and client injuries and high incidence of communicable disease rates .(Buchan & Aiken ,2008)

It is high time to solve the workforce shortage issues in the health care sectors in order to maintain the provision of quality treatment and to improve the safety of client in the rural health care environment (Harison,2007) .Government ,employers and employees have an inevitable role in solving these problems in the inner parts of rural Australia .Firstly ,Government takes initiatives to address the workforce shortages and to reduce the impact on nurses due to these shortages by implementing several nursing scholarship programmes outside the cities .(Harrison,2007)It includes rural and remote undergraduate scheme ,continuing professional education scheme for rural and remote nurses and national nurses re-entry scheme .

These schemes help the nurses in the rural areas to achieve higher degrees ,to specialise in specific field and to increase the professional skills in their field with the support of Government .(Harrison,2007)The main goals of these scheme are to increase the number of health graduate who choose to practise in rural and remote areas and to distribute on-going and substantial support and opportunities for health students considering rural and remote careers .It is a fact that ,rural people are more interested to seek and maintain jobs after completion of their studies ,while comparing the urban counter parts of Australia .(Harrison,2007)So ,if the Government support the students of rural background ,it will help to improve recruitment and retention of nursing and associated health professionals in rural and remote areas(Jones ,Humphreys & Wilson ,2005) .Moreover ,Australian Government is making an ample investment in the education and training of these health care professionals to ensure the accessibility of sufficient medical and nursing assistance of rural population to meet the growing health care needs of them.(Eley ,Young ,Baker & Wilkin ,2008)

In addition to this, University department of rural health have introduced some network programmes to improve the recruitment and retention of rural health professionals to solve the scarcity of health professionals .They mainly focus on medical, nursing and linked health students and provide opportunities to practise clinical skills in a rural environment. They also supports those health professionals who are currently practising in rural settings by providing education and infrastructure ,training and support .It will help to increase the number of health professionals in the rural areas . (Harrison,2007)

Employers also has an important role to solve the issues related to workforce shortages in the communities .Resource constraints in terms of personnel and equipment is still a problem in the rural settings .So the managers who have responsibilities over the health care setting should takes initiatives to solve these problems and should respond to the request made by registered nurse in the rural health care settings .(Hamcomb ,Darvinson & Patterson ,2007)Moreover continuous shift and prolonged working hours create dissatisfaction among rural nurse .So employers should introduce flexible work schedules ,advanced medical technologies to reduce the stress and special allowances into their organisations to attract the nurses into the rural settings .(Becker ,McCutcheon & Hegney ,2009)Besides ,legal and ethical issues in working environment create lots of problems to the nurses , and often they feel discomfort in practise .So the health care organisations should identify the range of legal and ethical issues that a nurse go through in their practise and they have to make their employees to face the challenges by introducing ethics committees to their organisations and by arranging the classes of experienced nursing staff .Employers have to give physical ,mental and financial support to their workers at working environment in order to reduce their stress and it is an effective strategy in the stress coping mechanism .So they can function well.(Lim et al,2010)

Nurses are obliged to identify the needs and decide how to meet them .They have to make a climate for healing of their clients .(Buerhaus ,Donelan ,Ulrich ,Norman ,Desroches &Dittus ,2007)It is therefore important that the Government and employers have to restructure the rural resource constraints for better and effective health outcome when rendering care .If the nurse work under pressure in the working environment ,they cannot function properly and cannot produce quality outcome .Therefore ,the organisations and Government should consider their needs in the work strategies and to keep these employees in meaningful work . (Mohale ,2008)Employees also has effective role in resolving the workforce shortage issue of rural health care settings .They have to be responsible to their profession and offer best quality care to the client .(Buerchaus et al ,2007)They can solve the problems by recognising the actual situation ,maintain good communication and effective team work and by problem solving within and among the team members .(Donelan et al,2008) Both the international and national nursing code of ethics stress the importance of generosity ,professional advocacy and serving clients’ best interest and ,the nurse have to follow it.(Harrison ,2007)

In conclusion ,the insufficiency of experienced nursing professionals is being highlighted as one of the biggest concern to achieve the value of health care system in rural Australia .The main causes of limited nursing workforce are 24 hours duty without rest ,high workload ,retirement of large proportion of nurses in every year and lack of qualified persons in the rural health care settings .Resource constraints such as inadequate water supply and electricity ,lack of communication facilities and poor accommodation also considered to be the reason for workforce shortage in the communities .This shortage has a great influence on professional nurses .It disturb their sleeping pattern ,family relationship ,physical and mental health .They also feel more stress ,discomfort and dissatisfaction in their profession .Professional nurses address lots of legal and ethical issues due to the shortage of nurses in the rural health care settings .Most of the times ,the nurses address problems in decision making ,advanced care planning and following the code of ethics due to over stress that they face without assistance in their working environment .It also affect the quality of care and health of the rural population .However ,these problems can be easily solved with the proper management of Government ,employer and employees .They implement a lot of scholarship programmes exclusively for the rural people , arrange ethical class in the organisations and meet the basic needs of the professional needs which is necessary for the nursing practise .

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**Essay Topic**

**Workforce Shortages in Rural Australia**

A common problem in rural Australia is the access to medical and nursing assistance due to a shortage of health professionals. Discuss causes of shortages, impact on nurses due to shortages and possible solutions to workforce shortages from different perspectives of employers, employees and governments. Include in your discussion the legal and ethical issues faced currently as a result of governments beingunable to provide acceptable levels of health care to the rural population.

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