



> Assist at Gallipoli for Anzac Day 2012

Volunteers with medical and nursing expertise are sought to assist with Visitor Services at Anzac Day commemorations in Gallipoli in 2012.

Conservation Volunteers under the supervision of the Department of Veterans' Affairs manages the Visitor Services team at the commemorative services, particularly the care of people with 'Special Needs'. Volunteers with a medical background can offer valuable skills for this very important task within the Visitor Services team.

Join this amazing 11-day experience as we explore the Gallipoli Peninsula and Istanbul and assist with these vital duties on Anzac Day. This all inclusive tour costs \$5200. For more information or to apply for this unique volunteer opportunity, go to [www.conservationvolunteers.com.au](http://www.conservationvolunteers.com.au). Applications are open until 15 November 2011.

> NMBA workshop - Review of the National Competency Standards for the Nurse Practitioner

On 2 August 2011 the ANF Federal Office was represented at this workshop which was chaired by Professor Mary Chiarella, on behalf of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. The workshop aimed to "scope out the competency standards to determine the need for a review" within the broader nursing and midwifery community. Discussions were led by mini presentations by representatives from varying perspectives, such as, academia, regulation, clinical practice, professional organisations, other stakeholders and employer groups. With feedback from the workshop there will be some revision of the Standards document which will then be circulated for broader consultation with stakeholders.

> HWA Expert Reference Group for the National Rural, Regional and Remote Health Workforce Strategy

Health Workforce Australia (HWA) has commenced work on the development of the National Rural, Regional and Remote Health Workforce (NRRRHW) Strategy. The NRRRHW Strategy is intended to establish the direction for future rural and remote health workforce development to improve health care services for those communities. The Strategy will be a complementary document to the Commonwealth National Strategic Framework for Rural and Remote Health, which is currently under review. An Expert Reference Group (ERG) will provide guidance and input into the development of NRRRHW Strategy. The ANF is represented on this group which will meet face to face three times during the course of the project from July 2011 to April 2012. The first meeting of the ERG was held on Wednesday 3 August 2011 in Canberra.

The initial phase of the NRRRHW Strategy development will be informed by half day consultation workshops to be held throughout September and October 2011. These workshops will cover 19 metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations. There will also be opportunity to provide written submission. For further information on the workshops and written submissions go to the HWA website: [www.hwa.gov.au](http://www.hwa.gov.au)

### > National Health Reform briefing

The Health Reform Transition Office is holding a series of briefings across the country to provide information on the National Health Reform. Representatives from Federal Office attended the session in Melbourne held on 31 August 2011. Participants were presented with an overview of the legislative and administrative processes involved in establishing the framework for implementing, monitoring and maintaining the Australian Government's National Health Reform agenda.

A detailed implementation guide, as well as questions and answers from the country-wide briefings, will be posted to the yourHealth website: [www.yourhealth.gov.au](http://www.yourhealth.gov.au)

### > DVA Co-ordinated Veterans Care Program

On 17 August 2011 the Clinical Reference Group for the Department of Veterans' Affairs Co-ordinated Veterans Care Program met in Canberra. Discussion centred around initial and on-going work on the Program, including early adopters; and, monitoring processes for evaluation effectiveness of the Program for the eligible members of the Veteran community. A final meeting of the Clinical Reference Group will be held in the next couple of months.

### > HWA Expert Reference Group for National Short-term management of employment demand arising from increasing nursing and medical numbers

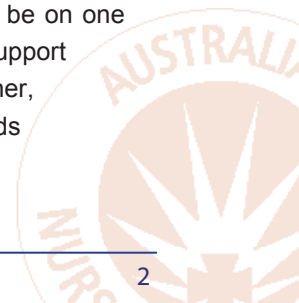
At the request of the Jurisdictional Policy Committee, Health Workforce Australia (HWA) undertook a project earlier in the year to consider and advise on options to respond to the employment demand arising from increasing numbers of new nurse graduates and medical interns. KPMG was engaged to assist with this review. The Final Report to Health Ministers provided a review and analysis of the short-term imbalance between demand for positions by students completing their studies in 2011 against supply of positions across all employment sectors in 2012 and an overview of potential solutions. Further project work on recommendations from the report is now being undertaken. The Expert Reference Group – Nursing and Midwifery, established at the beginning of the year, reconvened on 22 August 2011 to consider the proposed options and provide advice. The ANF is represented on the ERG. It is anticipated that the review will be concluded by the end of September 2011.

### > Diabetes Advisory Group

The Diabetes Advisory group was established by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing in July 2010 to oversee the pilot of the Coordinated Care for Diabetes Reform Measure. This measure commits an additional \$449.2 million to treatment for those with diabetes via a new voluntary comprehensive model of care. The ANF is represented on the advisory group which came together for their third meeting on Wednesday 24 August 2011. The advisory group of patient and health consumer representatives and key primary health care groups, including nurses, GPs and allied health professionals, is assisting the Government on the detailed implementation arrangements for this policy.

### > Telehealth Advisory Group

The ANF has been participating as a member of the Telehealth Advisory Group, established by the Australian Government to advise the Department of Health and Ageing on the rollout, implementation, training and evaluation of this initiative. The telehealth initiative, commenced 1 July 2011, provides financial support for online videoconferencing to connect patients in rural, remote and outer metropolitan areas to specialist services. Funding allows for health professionals to provide support at the patient-end of the online consultation. The medical specialist, consultant physician or psychiatrist can be on one end of the consultation with the patient on the other. Where it is determined that clinical support is required there is a rebate for the practice nurse, nurse practitioner, general practitioner, midwife or aboriginal health worker to also be in attendance. This is an important step towards



connecting the patient with the broader health care team for the provision of more accessible, integrated, collaborative care. The MBS telehealth item number for practice nurses is time limited, existing for only 6 months, until the Practice Nurse Incentive Payment (PNIP) block funding is introduced in January 2012. The item will then be rolled into the PNIP so that nurses are able to work to the full scope of their practice rather than limiting the care they provide to a handful of MBS item numbers.

The fourth meeting of the group was held on Thursday 25 August 2011. Items for discussion included: an overview of the first six weeks of MBS claims data; updates on the training and support package, telehealth standards, and trials; future directions; and the evaluation strategy. In the first 6 weeks this telehealth MBS item has been available there have been 545 claims with the highest number of claims in Queensland and NSW. To date 90% of services have been bulk billed. In relation to the future direction of this initiative, the ANF would like to see telehealth expanded even further to acknowledge the specialist support role that nurse practitioners, advanced practice nurses, general practitioners and allied health professionals provide at both ends of the online consultation.

#### > ANF/RCNA Pandemic Influenza Working Group

The Working Group held its latest regular meeting on 9 August 2011 via teleconference. It was noted that, while activity across the globe may be slow regarding H1N1 flu virus, there are still pockets of activity. Nurses and midwives should not be complacent and should maintain active promotion of vaccination to the community.

#### > Working safe in rural and remote Australia Project

The ANF Federal Office was involved in the Project Steering Committee and the Project Working Group this Project and participated in the finalisation of the specifications for a consultant tender brief. A select tender process will be undertaken for a consultant/s to undertake work towards the development of a 'working safe' framework to assist health and other professionals based in rural and remote communities. The project is scheduled for completion in 2012.

#### > NMBA Re-entry to practice proposed registration standard

In the submission to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) on the draft re-entry to practice proposed registration standard the ANF contends that when nurses and midwives wish to re-enter the health or aged care workforce after a period of absence (which could include registration lapse), we should create an environment conducive to returning, which assists in identifying individual competence to practice. We argue that this is clearly in the interests of protecting the public with competent clinicians, providing safe numbers of clinicians for the workforce, and showing fiscal responsibility in use of public funds.

The ANF's stance is that the draft standard imposes unnecessary obstacles to nurses and midwives wishing to return to the workforce, particularly those who have been out of practice for 10 years or more. We have stated quite clearly that we cannot support the proposed standard in its current form and consider that there is no available evidence to endorse the criteria and requirements for re-entry suggested by the NMBA. Given the dire 'predictions on workforce shortages in nursing and midwifery (by Health Workforce Australia, amongst others) it is not acceptable to propose a policy that is not based on evidence and that further restricts entry to the professions. In relation to availability and access to re-entry to practice programs the ANF notes with concern that there are currently a limited number of programs across the country.



> Early Childhood Development Workforce

The ANF responded to the Productivity Commission (the Commission) *Draft Research Report: Early Childhood Development Workforce* that while overall the document provides an informative resource on the early education and care workforce we had concerns in relation to Chapter 12: *Child health workforce*. Our particular concerns, in brief, are:

- Draft Recommendations 12.2 relating to provision of scholarships for postgraduate study in child health nursing. The ANF refutes the Commission's conclusion that such incentives should only be for "nurses who would otherwise be unwilling to practice in demonstrated areas of workforce shortage". This is a negative approach to workforce capacity building. We contend that it is in the interests of the community to support nurses and midwives who want to work in the child health field to be able to do so.
- Draft Recommendation 12.3 relating to qualifications in midwifery in addition to qualifications in nursing and in child health. The ANF has outlined the variation in models of care across jurisdictions and thus differences in qualification requirements. The ANF has supported the requirement for a midwifery qualification in Victoria and called on the Commission to include in the final report an acknowledgment of the right of Victoria to maintain its current model of care and qualification standards; as well as the incentive arrangement regarding scholarship provision, and amend recommendations 12.2 and 12.3 to reflect this recognition.

> Senate Community Affairs Committees Inquiry into the Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

Federal Office made a submission to the Senate Inquiry shown above in which we supported the Australian Government's decision to move funds from the Better Access program to the Access to Allied Psychological Services Program (ATAPS). This change sits well with the ANF's social justice stance as groups targeted for improved access to mental health services are the disadvantaged, Indigenous peoples and hard to reach sub-groups within the community. In so doing the new funding arrangement goes beyond the scope of the Better Access initiative. The additional benefit of ATAPS is that more groups of health professionals, including mental health nurses, can deliver services under this funding model.



**LEE THOMAS**  
Federal Secretary



**YVONNE CHAPERON**  
Assistant Federal Secretary

For more information about any of the above items contact your ANF state or territory Branch, the NSW Nurses Association (ANF NSW Branch) or the Queensland Nurses Union (ANF QLD Branch).