



australian nursing federation

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> Skilled Migration Federal Budget

There have been a number of significant announcements relating to temporary skilled migration in the 2011/12 Commonwealth budgets. These include an increase in temporary skilled migration numbers, the introduction of enterprise migration agreements for the mining and construction industries and regional migration agreements to operate in the non-metropolitan sectors. Further details can be obtained by contacting Nick Blake at the Federal office.

> Meeting of the Industrial Advisory Committee

The Industrial Advisory Committee will meet in Melbourne on 11 July 2011. A draft agenda is currently being compiled and will include a discussion on the equal pay decision in the SACS sector as well as the low paid bargaining decision in aged care.

> Review of ANF Agreements database

A review of agreements on the ANF database has been finalised in conjunction with the Branches. As a result a number of strategic network/organisational groupings have been identified and relevant agreements required for uploading and coding purposes. Subject to budgetary considerations and further discussion with the Branches, this would result in another 89 agreements for inclusion on the database covering public, private and the residential aged care sectors.

> Equal pay progress – Social and community services sector (SACS) workers

Fair Work Australia has handed down a preliminary decision on the first case to be argued under the Fair Work Act's equal remuneration provisions. The full bench of FWA found that women in the SACS sector do not receive remuneration equal to that "of employees of state and local governments who perform similar work". It found that "gender has been important in creating the gap" with comparable government workers. The tribunal has asked for further information and submissions on the issue of quantum before it makes its final decision on the nature and amount of any pay increase. There are about 200,000 mostly women workers in the SACS industry working in community and disability services. The ASU is seeking at least a 30% pay increase.

> Department of Health and Ageing enterprise agreement

The ANF has been participating in negotiations with the federal Department of Health and Ageing for a new enterprise agreement. The existing agreement expires on 8 August 2011. The agreement will cover all non-senior employees of the Department, including nurses engaged as Commonwealth Nursing Officers (CNOs). Among other claims, the ANF is seeking an increase in the professional development allowance for CNOs and the introduction of a qualifications allowance. The ANF is also supporting the CPSU's log of claims including for an 8% pay rise over two years for all employees.

> Northern Territory Public Sector nurses agreement

Negotiations for a new enterprise agreement to cover public sector nurses in the Northern Territory have commenced between the NT government and the ANF. Among other claims, the ANF is seeking a two year agreement, a pay increase of 6% per annum, improvements to various shift penalties and allowances, and the cessation of the overuse of temporary contracts. The existing agreement expires on 9 August 2011.

> Joint ANF/RCNA Pandemic Working Group

A teleconference meeting of the Working Group was held on 17 May 2011. The group noted that influenza activity is low across the Northern Hemisphere, and that although levels of influenza-like illness have increased slightly in Australia, they remain low as we lead into the winter months. The ANF and RCNA will keep a watching brief, continue to encourage nurses and midwives to seek vaccination for themselves, and to promote vaccination within the community.

> Telehealth Advisory Group

Following the Australian Government's decision to fund online consultations, the ANF has been participating as a member of the Telehealth Advisory Group to plan for this reform which is due to be introduced on 1 July 2011. A meeting was held on 3 May 2011. The objective of this telehealth initiative is to provide support for online videoconferencing to connect patients in rural, remote and outer metropolitan areas to specialist services. Funding will allow for health professionals to provide support at the patient-end of the online consultation. The medical specialist, consultant physician or psychiatrist will be on one end of the consultation with the patient on the other. Where it is determined that clinical support is required there will now be 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 ANF would like to see this initiative expanded even further to acknowledge the specialist support role that nurse practitioners and general practitioners provide at both ends of the online consultation.

The MBS telehealth item number for practice nurses will be time limited, existing for only six 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.

> ANF Professional Advisory Committee

The ANF Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) met for their first face to face meeting for 2011 on 31 May. Professional Officers from the State and Territory Branches were in attendance. Topics for discussion included: the School Nurses Professional Practice Standards; nursing and midwifery re-entry programs; the Nursing Guidelines for the Management of Medicines in Aged Care; credentialling; nurse practitioner and eligible midwives collaborative arrangements; the Senate Inquiry into AHPRA; the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's Professional Indemnity Insurance Registration Standard; and the Health Workforce Australia National Training Plan. Federal Office and State and Territory Branch reports were provided. The PAC is scheduled to meet again in August 2011 via teleconference.

> Consumer and Clinician Roundtable on the Draft Concept of Operations relating to the introduction of a PCEHR

Following on from the release of the Draft PCEHR Concept of Operations, the Department of Health and Ageing in conjunction with the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) hosted a consumer and clinician roundtable discussion on 25 May 2011 in Melbourne. The purpose of the session was to provide participants with the opportunity to seek clarification on issues relating to the PCEHR Concept of Operations and to discuss some of the key areas in the system design where decisions are yet to be made. Updates were provided on secure messaging delivery, the e-Health sites and some of the upcoming engagement opportunities.

> Lead Clinicians Groups Consultations

A submission was made by the ANF in response to the Australian Government's discussion paper on Lead Clinicians Groups: Enhancing clinical engagement in Australia's health system in February 2011. Following on from the initial discussion paper, the Australian Government engaged consultants Ipsos-Eureka to conduct a further multi-staged consultation process for this initiative. A range of meetings, interviews, workshops and roundtable discussions have subsequently been held with State and Territory Governments, key stakeholders and clinicians in April and May. ANF staff and members have participated in these consultations. Overall stakeholders were supportive of the idea of local Lead Clinicians Groups spanning the 'gap' between Local Hospital Networks and Medicare Locals. A further discussion paper outlining the current Commonwealth proposed position on Lead Clinicians Groups was released on 20 May 2011 for stakeholder consideration and review. The ANF Federal Office will prepare a draft response to the paper for State and Territory Branch input. Feedback to the Department of Health and Ageing is due by 17 June 2011.

> Health Workforce Australia: National Health Workforce Innovation and Reform Strategic Framework for Action Workshop

Health Workforce Australia has been holding a series of workshops around the country as part of consultation on a draft National Health Workforce Innovation and Reform Strategic Framework for Action. Federal Office was represented at the 3 May 2011 workshop held in Ballarat. Participation in the workshop was useful both from the perspective of being able to contribute to the discussion on the day and also as background preparation for the ANFs written submission, forwarded on 30 May 2011.

> Senate Inquiry into the Administration of the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA)

Following the ANF making a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Administration of Health Practitioner Registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), we were invited to give evidence to the Committee on 4 May 2011.

In an introductory statement at the public hearing the ANF welcomed the opportunity to appear before the Committee to clarify any issues raised in our written submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Administration of Health Practitioner Registration by AHPRA. The statement read:

The ANF was a strong advocate for the move to a national registration and accreditation scheme for the nursing and midwifery professions, in particular, and more broadly, for all health professions in Australia. Since the introduction of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme on 1 July 2010, we have continued our support for this Scheme. Given our commitment to the success of this important scheme, the ANF has been disturbed by the complaints raised by members, on issues which have the potential to undermine the credibility of the national Scheme.

ANF members have indicated significant issues regarding assessment of qualifications, initial and renewal of registration and the online register for the new Scheme. Many of these issues point to a lack of resourcing of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme in terms of personnel to handle the volume of registrants – both existing and new applicants; and, also in terms of preparation and knowledge level of the call centre staff.

The ANF views this Senate Inquiry as an opportunity to ensure that the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia are adequately equipped for their role as the national regulatory body. It is essential that the regulatory process serves its purpose of protecting the public and that nurses and midwives are dealt with fairly, equitably and efficiently within the Scheme.

In concluding, the ANF wishes to take advantage of this Inquiry to recommend that AHPRA establish a formal and ongoing advisory committee of the registered professions, and soon to be registered groups. This committee would essentially be an expansion of the existing Professional Reference Group (of which the ANF is a member), whose remit would include discussion of all issues pertaining to the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

> Federal Budget Health Briefing

ANF Federal Office attended the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing Budget briefing session held on Tuesday 10 May 2011 prior to Treasurer Wayne Swan's Budget speech from Parliament House. An overview of Health Budget initiatives was provided with the focus this year on mental health. The Gillard Government has committed an additional \$1.5 billion to boost a broad range of Australia's mental health services. The raft of new initiatives announced in the Budget will help provide much-needed social and clinical support for mental health across the country, especially measures focused on mental health problems in children. The announcement included \$32 million for the establishment of a Mental Health Commission. This will bring a whole of Government approach to addressing mental health, providing greater accountability and transparency to the sector. The ANF remain concerned that the Government still need to enter into urgent discussions with the sector's key stakeholders to identify ways to develop the workforce needed to provide the announced new services and programs. In addition to the \$2.2 billion over five years to deliver on national mental health reform, other health care initiatives included in the 2011-12 Federal Budget include: \$16.4 billion in additional hospital growth funding to the States from 2014-15; \$717 million to expand access to diagnostic imaging services and make medicines more affordable; and \$53 million to improve access to public dental services, particularly for people on low incomes.

> Health Workforce Australia: Consultation on short-term management of employment demand arising from increasing medical and nursing graduate numbers.

On 5 May 2011 Federal Office Professional Officers were interviewed by consultants from KPMG who have been engaged by Health Workforce Australia (HWA) to undertake a project on the short-term management of employment demand arising from increasing medical and nursing graduate numbers. In this preliminary discussion the ANF raised issues of primary concern from the perspective of nursing and midwifery undergraduate students and graduates. Of particular concern is the numbers of graduates of nursing and midwifery courses who were unable to secure employment at the start of 2011. There needs to be a flexible approach developed to the structure and funding of graduate programs, and the breadth of facilities available for transitioning students from academia to the health and aged care sector. The ANF will further contribute to this work through the HWA Expert Reference Group for Nursing and Midwifery. This group is scheduled to meet on 2 June 2011.

> Rural Health Workforce Australia Lunch for International Nurses Day

The team from Rural Health Workforce Australia (RHWA) invited ANF Federal Professional Officer, Julianne Bryce to attend a lunch to celebrate International Nurses Day on 12 May 2011. This year's theme 'Closing the gap: increasing access and equity' has particular relevance for rural Australia which suffers from persistent shortages of health professionals, including nurses. Over lunch, discussion was held on how more could be done to boost the rural nursing workforce. RHWA staff were particularly interested in advancing the cause of nursing students through provision of more rural placements and scholarships.

> Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Professional Indemnity Insurance Standard

Members of the ANF indicated significant issues regarding the clarity of the standard for professional indemnity insurance which was enacted on the introduction of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) on 1 July 2010. The ANF voiced concerns in relation to these significant issues to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) during previous consultations. The most recent

consultation on revision of the Professional Indemnity Insurance Arrangements Registration Standard; and newly developed Guidelines: Professional Indemnity Insurance for Midwives, by the NMBA provided a most welcome opportunity to raise on-going concerns. The ANF obtained legal advice on the Standard which was used in our advice to the NMBA on issues which need addressing to improve both the understanding of nurses and midwives and their professional indemnity insurance arrangements. The ANF submission is available from the Federal Office website under 'Submissions' at: www.anf.org.au

> Clinical Supervision Support Program

In a letter response to Health Workforce Australia the ANF noted the elements of the draft National Clinical Supervisor Support Framework were essentially sound. However, a statement in the explanatory information to the Framework infers clinical supervision may be shared across professions, for example in inter-professional placements. While the ANF is supportive of inter-professional clinical placements we do not support inter-professional clinical supervision which incorporates assessment of clinical competence. The ANF argues that nurses and midwives must be the only registered health professionals who can provide clinical supervision for undergraduate and postgraduate nursing and midwifery students. As members of the nursing and midwifery professions themselves, the ANF contends that they have a sound understanding of the context, scope and professional standards required for practice in these professions. They are therefore uniquely placed to assist nursing and midwifery students to apply their theory to practice and to assess their clinical competence. The ANF submission is available from the Federal Office website under 'Submissions' at: www.anf.org.au

> Revision of Accreditation Standards for Residential Aged Care

With a large number of members (registered nurses, enrolled nurses and assistants in nursing) who work in the aged care sector the ANF has a keen interest in the revision of the Standards for Residential Aged Care. Specifically, the ANF maintains that the Standards must reflect a capacity by the aged care facility to deliver safe, competent care to residents. This can only be assured when appropriately educated and adequate numbers of nursing staff are employed by the facility. The revision of the Standards provides another avenue for the ANF to argue for the need to improve investment in the people and material resources in aged care in Australia, leading to enhanced quality of care. These sentiments are the central theme of the ANF's national campaign Because We Care which aims to provide an optimal aged care environment for health professionals and elderly residents. Our submission highlighted that it is critical to the sustainability of a safe, competent aged care sector to have standards which govern the physical and emotional environment, the personal and clinical care, and the management of residential aged care facilities. The ANF submission is available from the Federal Office website under 'Submissions' at: www.anf.org.au

> HWA National Health Workforce Innovation and Reform Strategic Framework for Action

A submission was made by the ANF to Health Workforce Australia (HWA) on the draft National Health Workforce Innovation and Reform Strategic Framework for Action (Framework). The submission reflected support for the Framework's 'Domains for Action' and highlighted particular points of concern or caution in relation to the strategy statements within each domain.

Given that nursing and midwifery form the largest cohort of the health and aged care workforce, the ANF has a primary concern that any reform must start with a genuine evaluation of the sector (what's working and what's not) and agreement that respect will be given to existing roles in the pursuit of proposed innovation. The ANF has an industrial mandate to ensure a work environment conducive to the growth and development of the nursing and midwifery professions, leading to safe and competent delivery of health and aged care to the Australian community. Reform should not automatically mean wholesale change of the workforce profile or a diminution of qualification levels without a sound evidence base as the rationale for such change. While supportive of the national workforce planning by HWA the ANF contends that all stakeholders must be involved in the progression of this work. The ANF submission is available from the Federal Office website under 'Submissions' at: www.anf.org.au

> Concept of Operations relating to the introduction of a PCEHR system

The ANF has participated in many forums relating to the establishment of electronic health information management. This consultation by the Department of Health and Ageing provided the opportunity for the ANF to continue to contribute to the development of processes for the introduction of personal electronic health records systems. With the implementation of an electronic environment for managing health and aged care information, nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing (however titled) need the assurance that electronic systems will give them tools to enhance their practice, and therefore the health and well-being of the people for whom they provide care. The ANF continues to argue for the need for governments to invest in education, and people and material infrastructure, to support the implementation of electronic health records systems. The introduction of the PCEHR is an essential building block in the development of such a system across the country. The ANF considers that attention to detail in the implementation of the PCEHR will not only improve the quality and efficiency of the more comprehensive system to which it belongs, but just as importantly, will provide confidence in the system for the public and health professionals. The ANF submission is available from the Federal Office website under 'Submissions' at: www.anf.org.au



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LEE THOMAS
Federal Secretary



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvonne".

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).