



australian nursing federation

national news - april - june 2010

> Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

From 1 July 2010, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) will commence operation, responsible for the registration and accreditation of ten health professions, including nursing, across Australia. AHPRA supports the boards of the ten health professions, including the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. The ANF has been involved in negotiation of terms and conditions of employment for staff formerly employed by state-based nursing boards and now employed by AHPRA or related organisations.

> Model occupational health and safety laws

Work continues at Safe Work Australia (SWA) on the development of model occupational health and safety (OHS) laws that will be adopted by each State and Territory and are due to take effect from 1 January 2012. The ACTU, ANF and other unions have conveyed their concerns to SWA and to governments that the drafting of the laws are such that the highest OHS standards and rights for Australian workers will not be implemented and instead existing entitlements will be watered down. There will be further opportunity for comment when key regulations and codes of practice are released for public comment in late 2010.

> Take Home Pay Application

Fair Work Australia has now set directions and hearing dates for ANF application for Take Home Pay Orders to cover nurses employed in the aged care sectors in Queensland and in New South Wales. The ANF is to file its materials and witness statements by July 31 and the matter is set down for hearing over three days at the end of September 2010. ANF will be represented by legal counsel.

> Transition to the Nurses Award 2010

The transitional arrangements relating to the introduction of the Nurses Award 2010 will commence on 1 July 2010. Under the arrangements nurses will be progressively transitioned from existing industrial instruments to the modern award. Part of this transition is to establish appropriate classification and pay rates to apply to award reliant nurses. The Federal Office and IAC members have been in consultations with the Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) and peak employer organisations to ensure that nurses are protected throughout this process. The FWO has prepared transitional arrangements for selected nursing awards. These can be viewed at www.fwa.gov.au

> Termination of modernised awards

Part of the award modernisation is the termination by FWA of previous state and federal awards which are now superseded by modern awards. Consistent with their approach throughout this exercise FWA has called for written submissions of any award(s) that unions or employers may wish to preserve. Federal Office has filed a submission after conferring with Branches. A copy of the submission can be accessed at www.fwa.gov.au.

> Annual Wage Review 2009-2010

The Minimum Wage Panel of Fair Work Australia determined on 3 June 2010 to increase adult minimum wages by \$26 from 1 July 2010. The \$26 adjustment will apply to all modern award weekly wages with pro rata to part time employees. As a result of this decision, the national minimum wage for an adult employee working 38 hours per week is now \$569.90. The increase will apply to all modern awards and transitional Australian Pay

and Classification Scales. The increase will not apply to Division 2B state awards although the decision does indicate that FWA will review wage rates in Division 2B state awards prior to the next national wage case.

The adjustments are complicated due to the transitional arrangements, particularly those applying to New South Wales and Queensland. The Federal Office has been conferring with both Branches and has developed agreed transitional tables to give effect to the adjustments to minimum award wages.

> Skilled Migration Consultative Panel

The Federal Office continues to represent the federation at the Commonwealth government's Skilled Migration Consultative Panel which last met on 2 June 2010. The Consultative Panel is comprised of peak employer, state government and union representatives who confer with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) on matters relating to skilled migration in Australia.

At the last meeting the Panel discussed the structure and make-up of the new Skilled Occupations List (SOL) and the General Skills Migration Points Test Review, both instruments designed to target overseas workers with occupations of greatest need to Australia. Nursing continues to be the largest occupational group coming to Australia nearly 4,000 registered nurses came to Australia as temporary in 2008-2009 and 3,500 as permanent migrants.

The SOL and Points test review was initially undertaken by Skills Australia. Interestingly Skills Australia made a number of observations when reaffirming that registered nurses would be an occupation in demand in Australia into the future. These observations included:

- over the five years to November 2009, nursing employment increased by 21.9% and is expected to increase by 17.6% over the next five years;
- unemployed nurses seeking work is around 1.1%;
- the proportion of nurses leaving each year is around 6.3%; and

- the medium full time weekly earnings of an RN (before tax) is approximately \$1,100.

The Skilled Migration Consultative Panel will meet again towards the end of 2010.

> ACTU Industrial Legislation Committee

After a considerable period of non - activity the ACTU has now reconvened their Industrial Legislation Committee (ILC) which met in Melbourne on 1 July 2010. The ACTU ILC is a meeting of affiliates represented by Senior Industrial Officers who meet to discuss federal industrial legislation, ACTU IR policy and strategic litigation relating to industrial issues. The meeting is chaired by the ACTU Secretary and on this occasion was attended by the major unions and state and territory labor councils. Topics discussed included a review of the operation of the Fair Work Act, the forthcoming legislation priorities for the next term of government and mechanisms by which the ACTU could prosecute issues through the tribunals and the courts. The ACTU ILC is to meet quarterly. The next ILC meeting in September/October 2010.

> ACTU Industrial Officers Conference

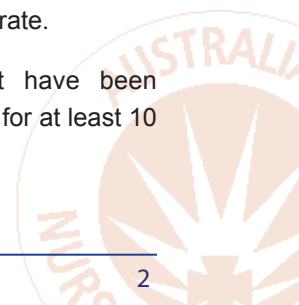
The ACTU has advised the next Industrial Officers Conference will be held in March 2011. Further details to follow.

> Paid Parental Leave - *Paid Parental Leave Act 2010*

The Paid Parental Leave Bill (PPL) was passed by the Federal Parliament on 17 June 2010 and is expected to receive ascent in July 2010. The PPL provides that eligible employees will receive paid parental leave on and from 1 January 2011.

The Act provides that parents of babies born on or after 1 January 2011 will receive a government funded payment of 18 weeks pay at the federal minimum wage (\$569.90 per week) which is taxable. The payment is a flat rate of 18 weeks at the federal minimum wage, regardless of whether an employee would ordinarily earn more or less. Part-time employees receive a flat rate.

To be eligible employees must have been engaged in paid work continuously for at least 10



out of the 13 months prior to the birth or adoption and have worked at least 330 hours in the ten month period.

Other aspects of the PPL scheme include that parents may change primary care status and share the PPL entitlement, so long as they meet the eligibility criteria. The introduction of the PPL Act will not have any impact on existing workplace paid parental leave entitlements. EBA's will remain unchanged until they expire and are renegotiated. There is an exceptional circumstance provisions which enables the entitlement to be passed on to other carers such as grandparents.

> PACER Plus

The Federal Office continues its work with the Pacific and Trade network NGOs and the ACTU to advocate for a fair trade agreement (FTA) between Australia, New Zealand and pacific island countries.

The FTA to be known as Pacer Plus is to be negotiated over the next 12 months and will have a significant impact on the provision of health and other services should the Australian government continue to insist that the agreement reflect current WTO terms in respect of both goods and services.

ANF's interest is in relation to the impact in the pacific on the provision of public health services and on the employment of nurses.

In April 2010, ANF participated in the forum arranged by the Public Health Association of Australia on impact of trade on health in the region and a further forum has been scheduled at Sydney University on 2 July 2010.

> Australian Health Informatics Education Council (AHIEC)

Federal Office is represented on the Australian Health Informatics Education Council. A meeting of the Council was held on 19 April which focussed on progress with work emanating from the Council's Strategic Plan. This included the ontology project and considering existing approaches used in Australia to support competency development in health informatics.

> Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia Editorial Committee

Federal Office has continued to provide advice on the development of a new publication by the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA). This publication will serve as a guide to medication administration for patients with swallowing difficulties or with enteral feeding tubes.

> Professional Advisory Committee

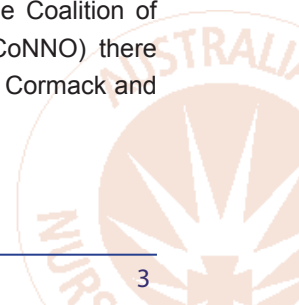
The Professional Advisory Committee held its first teleconference meeting for the year on 4 May 2010. Business carried over from the face to face meeting earlier in the year related to medicines management in aged care. The group was advised of a project conducted in Victoria – *The MedGap Project: A New Model of Care to Reduce the Risk of Medication-Related Problems at the Hospital-Residential Care Interface*. This study looked at the medication administration gap which occurs when elderly people are discharged from a tertiary health care facility back to their residential aged care facility. An interim residential care medication administration chart has been designed which is generated by the hospital pharmacist to cover the gap period (seven days) before the resident's GP can write up a new chart. The PAC members concurred that ANF should lend support to the project by promoting uptake of Recommendation 6 from the study's report which states:

The use of interim residential care medication administration charts, including hospital pharmacist generated charts (not signed by a medical practitioner), should be written into relevant practice guidelines and standards for residential care.

The major topic for discussion was issues regarding the imminent introduction of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for nurses and midwives on 1 July 2010.

> Coalition of National Nursing Organisations

At the first meeting for 2010 of the Coalition of National Nursing Organisations (CoNNO) there were guest presentations by: Mark Cormack and



Jim McGinty from Health Workforce Australia; and Anne Morrison from the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. Both organisations are in early stages of development and welcomed the opportunity to talk with representatives from the nursing and midwifery specialty organisations.

> Respecting Patient Choices National Reference Group

The first meeting of the RPC National Reference Group for 2010 was held on Thursday 20 May. This group is responsible for the oversight of the RPC Program funded by the Australian Government. Work has begun on the development of a Residential Aged Care Facility specific Advanced Care Plan. There was much discussion about the successful inaugural International Advanced Care Planning Conference held at the end of April that was convened by RPC Program Director, Associate Professor Bill Silvester.

> National Rural Health Alliance Council Meeting

The NRHA Council met on Thursday 17 June 2010. Issues for discussion included: the 11th National Conference to be held in Perth 2011; Councilfest planned for 27-31 August 2010; the development of the Rural and Remote Health Strategic Framework; management of the Rural Health Continuing Education (RHCE) Project; and the ongoing business of the Alliance. The next meeting of Council will be held on Monday 16 August 2010. Notice was given following the meeting that the NRHA AGM will be held on Saturday 28 August 2010 at University House, Australian National University in Canberra.

> Joint Pandemic Influenza ANF and RCNA Working Group

The Working group, which meets monthly, has concentrated on providing both print and electronic based information to members and the broader nursing and midwifery professions with a twofold aim of encouraging a) nurses and midwives to access (H1N1) 2009 influenza vaccination for themselves and b) nurses and midwives to promote vaccination amongst the general community.

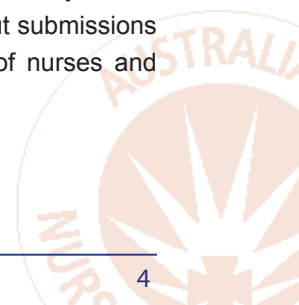
> International Nurses Day

The ANF joined with Royal College of Nursing, Australia to prepare and issue an information sheet for International Nurses Day (IND), 12 May, on the International Council of Nurses theme Delivering quality, serving communities: Nurses leading chronic care. The aim of this year's IND celebrations was to highlight nursing's contribution and innovative approaches to the prevention and management of chronic disease across the globe. The ICN called "for nurses everywhere to lead the fight against chronic disease; to act as healthy role models for their families, their patients and their communities; and, through their National Nursing Associations, to engage with ICN and its partners to advocate for necessary social, economic and political change." The information sheet is available from the ANF Federal Office website: www.anf.org.au.

> Senate Inquiry into the Health Practitioner Regulation (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2010

The Federal Office gave evidence to the Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee on the Health Practitioner Regulation (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2010. The Bill proposes to insert the terms 'division 1' and 'division 2' in the definition of 'nurse'.

The ANF position remains that the inclusion of 'division 1' and 'division 2' in the definition of registered and enrolled nurses is not appropriate. This is not common terminology for nursing or universally accepted terminology for the profession. It is not used in seven out of eight jurisdictions. Its inclusion will lead to confusion for registered and enrolled nurses, other health professionals and the community. There are two levels of nurse, clearly understood by the terms registered and enrolled nurse, not two divisions. The ANF requests that the words 'division 1' and 'division 2' be removed from the proposed definition of 'nurse' in the legislation. The ANF's position on this issue is reflected in the position of the Australian Peak Nursing and Midwifery Forum and has been consistent throughout submissions regarding the national regulation of nurses and midwives.



The ANF is also concerned about the proposed removal of the word 'registered' from the definition of 'nursing care'. It is the role of the registered nurse to supervise and where appropriate delegate to the enrolled nurse. Although enrolled nurses are responsible for the care they provide, the registered nurse remains accountable for care delegated to enrolled nurses. The definition should state that: *Nursing care means care that is given by a nurse or under the supervision of a registered nurse.*

> School Nurse Professional Standards

Federal Office attended the launch of the Victorian School Nurses ANF (Victorian Branch) Special Interest Group Professional Practice Standards on Tuesday 27 April 2010. Work commenced on these standards in 2008. The steering group conducted a literature review, wide consultations and produced several drafts for review and feedback. At the request of the ANF Victorian Branch Secretary, Lisa Fitzpatrick, the Federal Office Professional Team will explore the feasibility of adopting this work as National Standards for School Nurses.

> General Practice Nursing textbook launch

The first General Practice Nursing textbook for Australian nurses and midwives was launched at the APNA Conference held on the Gold Coast from 6-8 May 2010. Federal Professional Officers, Elizabeth Foley and Julianne Bryce, were contributing authors to this text, completing a chapter on scope of practice.

> ANF Victorian Branch Violence Forum

This one day forum held on 20 May 2010 brought together speakers from an interesting range of perspectives on the issues facing nurses and midwives in their day to day practice in relation to violence. Presentations included:

- architectural design to give staff in vulnerable front line positions in health care facilities a level of protection from aggressive clients and structural layouts and work flows to streamline patient care processes to hopefully decrease frustration which can lead to aggressive behaviours; introduction of infrastructure such as emergency alert buttons for staff;

- protocols and practices to promote de-escalation when aggressive behaviour is evident and designation of staff who will respond to code 'grey' calls within a facility; and
- on-going and structured liaison relationships between health care professionals and police officers, particularly in emergency department settings.

> ARACY AGM and Forum on Youth and Violence

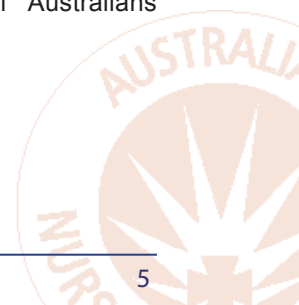
As ANF is a member organisation of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) the ANF Federal Office Professional Team participated in the Annual General Meeting and Forum on Youth and Violence held in Canberra on 31 May 2010. A panel of experts led a discussion on research activities, education programs and strategies (actual and potential) around the issues of young people as perpetrators of violence. A note of caution was sounded that policy makers should not presume that perpetrators are necessarily from backgrounds of socio-economic disadvantage and therefore, while early intervention programs in these target groups is essential, this is not the only solution.

> Federal Budget

The ANF Federal Office Professional Officers attended the Federal Budget Health Briefing in Canberra while Ged Kearney and Lee Thomas attended the Treasurers speech in Parliament House on 11 May 2010. The government dubbed this a "Building a Health and Hospitals Network for Australia's future" budget, which provides for \$7.3 billion dollars in new funding over the next five years to implement their key recommendations from the three major health reform reports of last year.

In brief:

1. deriving from the **Preventative Health Taskforce** report there was funding for:
 - boosting the numbers of Australians participating in sport;
 - cutting smoking rates;
 - tackling binge drinking; and
 - managing diabetes.



2. deriving from the **National Primary Health Care Strategy** report there was funding for:

- more comprehensive and convenient General Practice and primary care (specifically \$390 million to support general practice nurses).

3. deriving from the **National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission** Report there was funding for:

- more GP super clinics – upgrading of existing facilities and building new ones
- mental health (\$13 million for mental health nursing);
- closing the Gap initiatives to strengthen Indigenous communities, for example, early childhood care;
- rural health – more doctors, a rural locum scheme for nurses to allow time for taking leave, clinical training scholarships for allied health students;
- e-health – for implementing the personally controlled electronic health records (an opt-in system);
- the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding with Medicines Australia for a better deal on PBS medicines;
- quicker access to high quality hospital care – for example, funding to reduce emergency department waiting times, new sub-acute hospital beds, Government to become major funder of public hospitals, establishment of Local Hospital Networks;
- funding for the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care;
- aged care funding to better support nurses working in aged care (a \$132 million package some of which was funding redirected from the Bringing the Nurses Back to the Workforce program which has been disbanded):
 - ◇ funding provided to assist existing aged care workers to upgrade

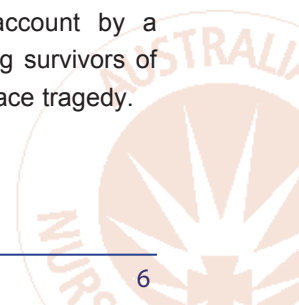
qualifications (Cert III, EN, RN), more scholarships for EN and RN;

- ◇ increase numbers of nurse practitioners in aged care;
- ◇ funding to explore regulation of personal care workers and assistants in nursing in aged care; and
- ◇ funding to conduct a research study on staffing levels, skills mix and resident care needs in residential aged care facilities.

These aged care measures are a welcome response to the ANFs national *Because We Care* campaign and set the direction for further reforms in the aged care sector.

> ANF Victorian Branch Professional Day: Are you ready?

The Federal Office Professional team was represented at the ANF Victorian Branch Annual Professional Day which focused on 'practising in a changing health care environment'. The keynote speaker, The Hon Mark Butler MP, Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Health, presented an overview of the Government's national health reforms. Professor Jeff Richardson, a health economist, included in his rather scathing attack on the health reform agenda funding, a view that Australia is a **mean** country in terms of expenditure on the poor and vulnerable. Associate Professor Sabina Knight, Centre for Remote Health, gave us an insight into her journey providing a nursing voice as a member of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission from her remote area nurse perspective. Associate Professor Susan 'Neill, Executive Director of Nursing, Cabrini Health talked about nursing leadership in terms of working with clinical nurses to maximize their interaction time with patients and reduce time on non-direct care issues; Anne Morrison, Executive Officer of the newly established Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, gave an overview of the new regulatory environment for nurses and midwives after 1 July 2010. The day ended with an eloquent and moving account by a paramedic's experience of rescuing survivors of the 1998 Sydney to Hobart yacht race tragedy.



> Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council Farewell Dinner

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) was established in 1992 to facilitate a national approach to nursing and midwifery regulation, with the board consisting of representatives of each of the State and Territory Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authorities. With the move to national registration and accreditation for health practitioners from 1 July 2010 the members of the ANMC Board will cease to exist. The regulatory work of the Council was therefore officially transferred to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) during a joint Board meeting between ANMC and NMBA on 15 June 2010, in Canberra. This historic event, and the reconstitution of the ANMC Ltd as the national accreditation body for nursing and midwifery, was celebrated at a dinner held in Canberra on the evening of 15 June 2010. The Federal Office Professional team has worked closely with the ANMC on a range of projects over the years and was pleased to be able to represent the ANF at this function, along with the Federal Assistant Secretary, Lee Thomas. The new Board for the ANMC Ltd was announced on the night with Professor Jill White being appointed as the Chair and Lee Thomas, ANF, as the Deputy Chair. In addition to the Council's focus now on accreditation of education providers and programs of study, the ANMC Ltd remains the gazetted assessing authority for General Skilled Migration for the Commonwealth Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

> National Medicines Policy Partnerships Forum

The Federal Office Professional team was represented at the 2010 National Medicines Policy (NMP) Partnerships Forum held on 30 June, in Sydney. This was the second annual Forum hosted by the NMP Committee and Executive to share information on the work undertaken to date in relation to the key priorities (outlined below) set by the Minister for Health and Ageing for these groups, and to seek stakeholder input and views on *Informed and active consumers* to assist the work plan implementation progress for this priority.

The five key priority areas for the NMP Committee and Executive are:

- integrating the medicines policy framework into health system reform;
- informed and active consumers;
- evidence into practice and policy;
- monitoring medicines in use; and
- informing the research agenda.

The Forum participants brainstormed strategies to improve medicines health literacy, making the best use of existing medicines information and resources and medicines communication in healthcare encounters between consumers and healthcare professionals. Dr Sophie Hill, Coordinating Editor of the Cochrane Review Group on Consumers and Communication at La Trobe University, made the point in her presentation to the Forum, that health literacy is not just about providing more information but that there must be enabling strategies to equip people to know where to look for information and how to know when the information is from a credible source.

> Conferences

The Federal Office staff attended the following conferences:

- The International Advanced Care Planning Conference
- Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMNH) Primary Mental Health Care Conference
- Australian Practice Nurses Association Conference
- RCNA Summit
- NPS National Medicines Symposium
- Nursing History Conference

> Submissions

The following submissions have been completed and are available on the ANF Federal Office website.

- Inquiry into Health Practitioner Regulation (Consequential Amendment) Bill 2010
- Response on the proposed Regulations for the Healthcare Identifiers Service



- Maternity Collaboration
- Eligible Midwives
- National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission
- Royal Australian College of General Practice Curriculum
- Briefing on Violence in Nursing
- Development of a quality framework for the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS)

> Branch Conferences

Lee Thomas and Yvonne Chaperon from the Federal Office attended the Tasmanian Branch annual delegates' conference in Hobart. Lee and Yvonne were pleased to have been able to give the Federal Office report. The conference was extremely well attended and a great success overall. Thanks to all at the Tasmanian Branch their hospitality.



GED KEARNEY
Federal Secretary



LEE THOMAS
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).