



australian nursing federation

national news - february/march 2011

> Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia

Ongoing issues continue to play a significant part in the operation of the new national registration scheme operated by the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA). These issues include confusions over registrations, long delays in answering telephone calls to the AHPRA call centre, delays in certificate release for registrants, 6-9 month delays in authorisation of nurse practitioners, to name a few.

The Australian Government has increasing concerns particularly in light of the fact that almost all nurses and midwives will be re-registering under the new scheme in May this year. The ANF Federal Secretary and Assistant Federal Secretary recently attended a meeting with the Government to discuss the outstanding issues and ongoing concerns.

A Senate Inquiry will be held into the chaotic changeover to a national registration system. The Finance and Public Administration Committee will look at the capacity and ability of AHPRA to implement national registration, investigate its performance, and consider the impact on practitioners, patients, hospitals and other health service providers. The Committee is seeking written submissions by 14 April 2011 and the inquiry is to report by 13 May 2011. A public hearing will be held in Canberra on 4 May 2011. Further information regarding the inquiry can be found at:

www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/fapa_ctte/health_practitioner_registration/index.htm

> Federal Budget Submission

The ANF 2011/12 federal budget submission incorporated proposals including increasing nurse practitioners in aged care, the introduction of needleless devices in all hospitals and health services, appropriate career paths for nurses in primary care and financial incentive schemes for nurses and midwives to relocate to rural and remote settings. The submission can be found on the ANF Federal Office website.

> Political Meetings

ANF Federal Office staff have met with: Senator Rachael Siewert; Debra O'Neill, Member for Robertson; Stephen Jones, Member for Throsby; Mike Symon, Member for Deakin; Ed Husic, Member for Chifley; and the Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Ageing and Mental Health.

> 13th Annual Health Symposium

The Federal Secretary addressed the 13th Annual Health Symposium held in Sydney on 3 March regarding nurse practitioners. The presentation covered the development of the role, the scope and extent of the role, the variety of contexts within which a nurse practitioner can practice and the future of nurse practitioners and eligible midwives now with the introduction of access to Medicare Benefits rebates and Pharmaceutical subsidies. The presentation was well received by the audience which was heavily medically dominated.

> The Needlestick Alliance

The Needlestick Alliance met by teleconference and confirmed the terms of reference and called for nominations for a chairperson. The ANF Federal Office is a participant in the Alliance which is calling on all hospitals and health services nationally to implement needleless devices with the aim of reducing the incidence of needlestick injuries to health workers.

> NT Delegates Conference

The Federal Secretary and senior Federal Industrial Officer attended the NT delegates conference and Professional day held in Darwin on 24-25 March. The Federal Secretary presented on Primary health care national registration and issues challenging nurse and midwives.

> Low paid bargaining

The application by United Voice and AWU for a Low Paid Bargaining Authorisation for employees in the aged care sector has now concluded. At this stage Fair Work Australia will determine whether the workers are low paid and should be authorised to continue proceedings under the low paid bargaining provisions. It is expected that a decision in regard to this issue will be handed down in the next 6-8 weeks.

> Equal Pay Case – Social and Community Services Sector

The ASU application for an Equal Pay Order for employees in the SACS sector has now concluded and is awaiting a decision. In the last two weeks state governments and other employers have filed their final submissions which generally support the application, but seek to draw the Tribunal's attention to the potential high cost of a successful application. It's not expected that a decision in this matter will be handed down for some time.

> Variations to Nurses Award 2010

Fair Work Australia has approved an ANF application to vary the Nurses Award to include references to midwives and midwifery services in the coverage clause of the award and in the classification definitions schedule. It has also approved the removal of a clause which excluded employers bound by the Pharmacy Industry Award 2010. This makes it clear that nurses employed in community pharmacies are covered by the Nurses Award 2010. The variations have been backdated to take effect from 1 January 2010.

> Annual wage case Fair Work Australia

The Minimum Wage Panel of Fair Work Australia has commenced proceedings in relation to the annual wage review for 2010-2011. Unions are seeking a \$28 per week increase in the national minimum wage and in other award rates up to the benchmark trade rate. For classifications above that award rate unions are seeking a 4.2% increase. The panel is conducting regional consultations across Australia between March and May with an outcome expected sometime in June 2011.

> Because We Care – Quality Care for Older Australians

The Because We Care campaign has continued to hold a range of activities throughout Australia in 2011.

The draft Productivity Commission (PC) report was released in late January and ANF took an active role in opposing and criticizing the draft which made no recommendations on care, staffing hours, skills mix or guarantee of nursing hours for older Australians.

To support our position on 'putting the care' back into aged care, we have undertaken activities to reinforce the support for this position to the PC and also the federal government. Our campaign has been on ensuring that Labor and particularly the Prime Minister delivers on their promise for aged care reform in their second term of office.



February 14 National Day of Action – Show some love to older Australian's



The ANF held a national day of action on February 14 to urge Prime Minister Gillard to show some love for older Australians. Events were held around Australia, with the major media conference being held in Melbourne with the Federal Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, stakeholders, providers, members and residents.

The Minister and ANF Federal Secretary Lee Thomas addressed the conference. All major providers and stakeholder groups also attended to 'show some love for older Australians'.

Productivity Commission Public Hearings

The ANF collected 26,000 petitions online and via hard copy from members and residents to put pressure on the PC to make recommendations on staffing levels, competitive wages, skills mix and the focus on care in their final report. These petitions were handed to Commissioner Mike Woods on the first day of the public hearings in Melbourne. ANF members rallied outside the hearing.

The ANF Federal Secretary gave evidence at this hearing, and it is expected that up to 30 ANF members and officials will give evidence to the PC around the country to show why we need to put the care into aged care. The public hearings are:

- Monday 21 March – Melbourne
- Thursday 24 March – Hobart
- Friday 25 March – Brisbane
- Monday 2 March – Sydney
- Thursday 31 March – Adelaide
- Friday 1 April – Perth
- Tuesday 5 April - Canberra



Other campaign activities include:

- Billboards in Qld and SA
- Online poll
- Email message to Minister Butler – Qld
- Rally outside PC – NSWNA
- Press conference – outside Victorian PC hearing
- Strategic contact with local and national media
- Meetings with Minister Butler, Minister Roxon, and other key Members of Parliament
- E newsletter to federal Labor MP's regarding the PC draft report
- E newsletters to BWC campaign subscribers

The ANF has started to get all federal MP's, state health ministers and community groups to sign our pledge for quality aged care. The main focus of the campaign activities will be to have all key federal MP's sign the pledge in the coming months.

> Health Workforce Australia National Aged Care Medication Management Project

The third meeting of the HWA Medication Management Project Stakeholder Reference Group was held via teleconference on Thursday 17 February 2011. A progress report on Phase 1 of the project was given by the Project Consultants outlining the findings of the survey undertaken between November 2010 and January 2011. The survey dealt with issues relating to: workforce; clinical practice; legislation/regulation; and professional/industry codes, standards and guidelines. Respondents were asked to identify barriers and ideas for improvement. Ninety two surveys were distributed with a 57% response rate. The survey findings will be used as a basis for the discussion at a National Medication Roundtable to be held in March 2011.

> Australian Health Informatics Education Council

The ANF Federal Office has representation on the Australian Health Informatics Education Council (AHIEC) and participated in the most recent meeting, held 18 February 2011. The Steering Committee of AHIEC has reviewed its Terms of Reference with a view to strengthening the focus of the Council this year. The mission of the Council is: To address the supply of health informaticians and to increase the information management skill and knowledge of health workers across the sector. The ANF works with our colleagues from Nursing Informatics Australia on AHIEC to represent the interests of the nursing and midwifery professions as significant users of health informatics in the health and aged care sectors. For further information on the work of the Council go to the AHIEC website at: www.ahiec.org.au

> National Rural Health Alliance

Representatives of the 31 organisations that form the NRHA Council travelled to Canberra for a meeting with the Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon and the Independents on Wednesday 23 February 2011. The ANF is a member of the Alliance. Minister Roxon reported to Independents Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor on some of the health elements of the agreement between the two crossbenchers and the Gillard Government. The NRHA attended the briefing in its capacity as the peak non-government organisation for rural and remote health. A major topic of discussion was the Government's health reform agenda, in particular how Medicare Locals in rural and remote areas are going to succeed with the challenges expected of them. Minister Roxon confirmed that plans are progressing to establish a strong rural health agency, a commitment made to the Independents and supported by the Alliance, to provide a whole of government approach to rural and remote health. The members of the Alliance recommitted their efforts to work closely with government to improve policies and programs impacting on health in rural and remote areas.

> Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia Editorial Committee

The SHPA Editorial Committee was formed in early 2010 to advise on the development of a new publication. This publication is a guide to medication administration in patients with swallowing difficulties or enteral feeding tubes. The publication "Don't rush to crush" is now in the final stages of development. The committee met via teleconference on 23 February 2011 to finalise feedback on the introduction, glossary, formatting and acknowledgements. It is anticipated that the guide will be published midway through this year.

> ACSQHC Health Care Health Service Medication Expert Advisory Group

The Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) Health Service Medication Expert Advisory Committee (HSMEAG) met in Adelaide on 25 February 2011. This national committee was previously known as the National Inpatient Medicines Chart (NIMC) Oversight Committee. The change of name and terms of reference reflects the enlarged scope of work undertaken by this committee. The role of this committee encompasses advising on health service-based medication standardisation initiatives as well as on health service-based medication safety and quality. At this first meeting of the committee for the year issues for discussion included: injectable medicines; medication safety alerts; NIMC National Audits; the hospital to RACF interim medication chart; and medication chart development guiding principles. The HSMEAG will meet again in June 2011 in Melbourne.

> Health Workforce Australia

ANF Federal Office staff met with Health Workforce Australia (HWA) CEO Mark Cormack and Clinical Lead, Associate Professor Hannah Dahlen in relation to the HWA National Training Plan on 24 February 2011. HWA provided a briefing on the Plan for nurses, midwives and doctors which aims to provide an understanding of the health professional requirements of Australia for these professions with a goal of achieving self sufficiency in health professional supply by 2025. The ANF will be represented on the National Training Plan Governance Committee.

> ANF Professional Advisory Committee

The ANF Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) met via teleconference on 8 February 2011 with Professional Officers from the State and Territory Branches in attendance. Topics for discussion included: national registration; re-entry to practice; the School Nurse Professional Practice Standards; advanced practice for Diabetes Nurse Educators; plans for International Nurses Day and national submissions on health reform. The PAC is scheduled to meet face to face in Melbourne on 30 May 2011.

> Australian Nurses for Continence Strategic Planning Day

The ANF Federal Professional Officer was invited to present on behalf of the Coalition of National Nursing Organisations (CoNNO) Secretariat, at the Australian Nurses for Continence Strategic Planning Day in Melbourne on 18 February 2011. The presentation provided an overview of the progress to date of the CoNNO National Nurse Credentialing Framework Project.

> Lead Clinicians Groups: Enhancing clinical engagement in Australia's health system

A submission was made in response to the Australian Government's discussion paper on Lead Clinicians Groups: Enhancing clinical engagement in Australia's health system. The ANF made the point that there needs to be a thorough review of the existing State and Territory based mechanisms for clinician engagement prior to decisions regarding the necessity for establishment of a nationally constituted group. Further, that under the National Health and Hospitals Networks the 'new-look' local clinical groups should have well-defined lines of communication and operation with local hospital/healthcare networks and primary health care organisations, to reduce duplication of effort and to enable clinician participation in service delivery decision making. We argued that nursing and midwifery leadership within jurisdictions' health departments, have established effective mechanisms for consultation on clinical standards and service delivery issues and that it is imperative nursing and midwifery professions' consultation processes be retained in all States and Territories and effective links are established with the local multidisciplinary clinician groups. The submission can be found on the ANF website.

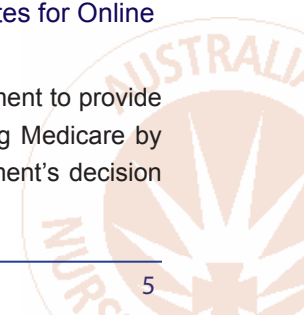
> Review of the Transparency of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA)

Given the numbers of members across all areas of the health and aged care sectors, the ANF has an intense interest in medicines and all other therapeutic products used in treatment regimes. A concern for the well-being of the people for whom the nursing and midwifery professions provide care naturally extends to the regulatory processes for the approval and monitoring of these items. The ANF therefore made a submission to the recent review of the Transparency of the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) being undertaken by the Australian Government. We advised that as members of regulated professions, nurses and midwives appreciate the importance of regulation in defining and maintaining standards in the interests of protection of the public, and therefore, fully supported the need for this protective mechanism in the health and aged care environment.

The ANF submission raised the fact that problems are encountered by nurses, midwives and other health professionals, as well as consumers of health and aged care services, due to inability in the past to have meaningful communication with the TGA. Accordingly the ANF supports the preparedness of the Government to undertake a review regarding the transparency of information processes between the TGA and stakeholder individuals and groups. The ANF submission expressed support for other submissions to the TGA review and noted points of concurrence.

> Connecting Health Services with the Future: Modernising Medicare by Providing Rebates for Online Consultations

The ANF welcomed the opportunity to respond to an invitation from the Australian Government to provide comment on a discussion paper Connecting Health Services with the Future: Modernising Medicare by Providing Rebates for Online Consultations. Our submission gave support to the Government's decision



to fund online consultations including the required support and infrastructure. The discussion paper focused on the importance of the role of medical specialists and general practitioners in the design and implementation of this proposal. The ANF pointed out that it is essential that nurses and midwives are involved in this consultation phase as the success of this initiative will depend largely on their input and support. The ANF is pleased to note that under the new arrangements, Medicare rebates will also be available for the nurse practitioner, midwife, Aboriginal health worker or general practice nurse to attend the 'patient end' of the consultation where clinically necessary. This Australian Government initiative provides the opportunity to improve consumer access to the safe and effective care that nurses and midwives already provide. The ANF considers that this important Government initiative to provide rebates for online consultations will improve timely access to expert health care by the community with the essential support of the most appropriate health care professional. The ANF contended that, given the significant reliance on services provided by nurses and midwives in the Australian health sector, it is vital that the nursing and midwifery professions are involved in the design and roll out of this initiative.

> National Prescribing Service

ANF Federal Office was represented at the National Prescribing Service Stakeholder function to meet the NPS Board members, held in Melbourne on the evening of 24 February 2011. The function was held at the Melbourne office of NPS. Such events are usually held at the Sydney office of NPS and several stakeholder groups, including the ANF, expressed appreciation at the Boards' decision to conduct one of their regular meetings in Melbourne to enable greater access to stakeholder groups.

You may have noticed advertisements on the TV from the NPS. This is the first phase of NPS's Be medicinewise campaign, launched on January 30, with Be Medicinewise Week. The campaign has received extensive coverage in the media, and in combination with advertisements on television, radio and in print, helping to build awareness amongst Australians about the medicines they take and the decision they make about their health.

The second part of the campaign 'Managing Pain' has just started, with a focus on three key areas:

- Acute lower back pain
- Using over the counter analgesics with a chronic condition and
- measuring and administering the correct dose of children's medicines.

New television commercials, print advertisements and online content will be supported by media interviews with NPS spokespeople and editorial stories containing useful information about over the counter analgesics for consumers and health professionals. The NPS website has also been updated with new content to help consumers navigate their medicines and health decisions when it comes to pain relief.

> Health Workforce Australia National Training Plan Governance Committee

The first meeting of the Health Workforce Australia (HWA) National Training Plan (NTP) Governance Committee was held in Melbourne on 2 March 2011. The ANF is representing nurses and midwives on this committee. The objective of the HWA Project is to develop a NTP for doctors, nurses and midwives that delivers national self sufficiency by 2025. The Governance Committee has been established to advise HWA on stakeholder issues relating to the NTP, ensure there is appropriate consultation and that the resulting NTP is credible and useful. The two key deliverables from this project are: a report to the Australian Health Ministers' Conference and the provision of an electronic planning tool for use by key stakeholders. It is anticipated that the NTP will be completed by December 2011 to provide baseline data which will be monitored annually to track progress on agreed training plan milestones.



> Department of Veterans' Affairs Clinical Reference Group

The second meeting of the DVA Clinical Reference Group for the Coordinated Veterans' Care Program was held on 4 March. Over the past few months the Federal Office representative to this group has provided input to the development of guidelines for this program, which will commence mid this year. Time was spent in this second meeting reviewing the final draft of the guidelines, as well as discussing additional social support services to supplement the program. Communication and education for staff and veterans were also issues of high importance for meeting participants. To learn more about the program visit the DVA website at: http://www.dva.gov.au/health_and_wellbeing/health_programs/cvc/Pages/default.aspx

> Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement Programs Reference Group

The second meeting of the PRG for the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement (5CPA) was held in Melbourne on 8 March 2011. The Fifth Agreement between the Australian Government and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia commenced on 1 July 2010. The ANF Senior Federal Professional Officer, was nominated by the ANF and invited by the Minister for Health and Ageing to serve as a member of the PRG until 30 June 2015. The PRG consists of a number of representatives from peak groups and experts, both within and external to the pharmacy sector. The Group was established to provide advice on the policy dimensions of the pharmacy programs, including their scope and evaluation requirements. Following the meeting the Department of Health and Ageing and the Guild has released three consultation papers and is inviting written submissions to assist in the development of three new initiatives being funded as part of the 5CPA. The three initiatives are:

- Continued Dispensing of PBS Medicines in Defined Circumstances will allow pharmacists to provide an urgent supply of a limited number of medicines for long term therapy where despite the best efforts of both the patient and the pharmacists, a valid prescription is unavailable.
- Supply and PBS Claiming from a Medication Chart in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs) will introduce supply and claiming of PBS medicines from a medication chart in RACFs.
- Electronic Recording and Reporting of Controlled Drugs will implement an electronic system to collect and report data relating to controlled drugs.

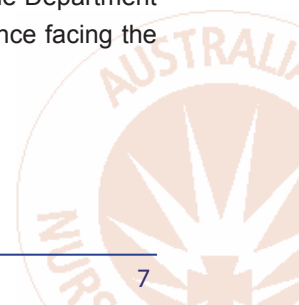
Submissions close on 4 April 2011.

> HWA National Aged Care Medication Management Project Roundtable

A National Medication Roundtable was held in Melbourne on 10 March 2011. This roundtable forms Stage 2 of the three part National Aged Care Medication Management Project auspiced by Health Workforce Australia and managed by Aged and Community Services Australia. Thirty invited participants representing aged care providers, consumer and workforce bodies, government, professional and expert advisors attended to help design a strategic roadmap for medication management across the national aged care sector. Presentations were provided on Stage 1 of the project which was the scoping/gap analysis phase. Members of the Project Stakeholder Reference Group which includes the ANF participated in the roundtable discussions.

> Ageing Consultative Committee

ANF Federal Office is represented on the Australian Government Ageing Consultative Committee (ACC). The Committee, which includes commercial and not-for-profit aged care providers, consumer groups, professional and union bodies met at Parliament House in Canberra on 24 March 2011. The Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler was in attendance to address the Committee and the Department of Health and Ageing provided policy updates followed by discussion on issues of importance facing the aged and community care sectors.



> Climate and Health Alliance

ANF has joined an alliance of health care groups and individuals in a newly established organisation called the Climate and Health Alliance (CAHA). The inaugural meeting was held in August 2010 and CAHA has this month received confirmation of its legal status as an incorporated association.

CAHA's members are organisations and individuals from the health sector with an interest in debating the issues and taking action on climate change. The focus of CAHA is the health effects of climate change. The impetus for its establishment came from an article published in a 2009 issue of *The Lancet*, which declared that climate change poses the single biggest threat to human health and called on the health care community to be active in the debate and frame climate change as a health issue. Some of the environmental impacts of climate change with implications for human health include changing weather patterns and rainfall, extreme weather, changes in the food and water supplies and rising seas.

CAHA's organisational members include the Australian Hospitals and Healthcare Association, the Public Health Association of Australia, Doctors for the Environment, CRANaplus and the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS). CAHA also has an expert advisory group made up of individuals with academic and scientific backgrounds to assist with research and to ensure that CAHA takes a robust, evidence-based approach in its public statements and activities.

In November last year CAHA participated in a lobbying day in Canberra, along with representatives from The Climate Project, Youth Climate Coalition, Union Climate Connectors, to speak with MPs about climate change. The day was organised by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), who provided small group training on how to tailor a message and speak confidently with politicians. The focus of the lobbying day was the importance of putting a price on carbon pollution in the form of a carbon tax. This issue is now firmly on the agenda.

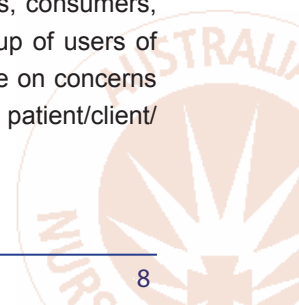
CAHA has also responded to Senate inquiries into sustainable population and wind farms, and will be presenting to the Senate committee in March. More information about CAHA can be seen at: <http://www.caha.org.au>

> Joint ANF/RCNA Pandemic Influenza Working Group

The first meeting of the Working Group was held via teleconference on 1 March, convened by the ANF Federal Professional Officers. The group noted that there have been no updates from either the World Health Organisation or the Australian Government regarding pandemic influenza, since November 2010. There has however, been confirmed cases of H1N1 2009 virus infection in the UK, with reports of 10 deaths and warnings of increasing flu activity. Information was received from the Department of Health and Ageing of the provision of influenza vaccination information packages available for midwives. ANF members will be provided with accurate and up to date information about vaccination via the ANJ, throughout the year.

> Roundtable Discussion on the progress of e-health in Australia, with particular focus on the personally controlled electronic health record (PCEHR)

The National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) held a round table in Brisbane on 15 March, to specifically consult with nurses about progress on the e-health agenda. The ANF Federal Office representative stressed that two important issues for nurses and midwives were access and language – access in terms of actual hardware infrastructure and technology support (especially in rural and remote parts of the country), as well as password access; and language used in patient record software packages which relates to nursing and midwifery practice. Federal Office will be participating in a further consultation forum at the end of the month, which will include representatives from health professionals, consumers, IT industry (vendors), and policy makers. As nurses and midwives will be the largest group of users of e-health it is vital that we continue to learn about the work of NEHTA and to provide advice on concerns and issues for our professions in using the electronic systems to streamline practice and patient/client/resident care processes.



Go to the following website for information on the benefits of the personally controlled electronic health record: <http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/content/home>

> NHHN Reforms Workshop

The Department of Health and Ageing held a workshop for members of the Ageing Consultative Committee (ACC) on National Health and Hospital Network Reforms on 23 March 2011 in Canberra. Presentations were given on Local Hospital Networks, Medicare Locals, Lead Clinician Groups and Home and Community Care (HACC) Reforms with a focus on their interaction with aged care. The ANF Federal Office is represented on the ACC and attended the workshop.

> Unregulated health practitioners consultation forum

Federal Office, along with ANF Victorian Branch participated in a consultation forum on unregulated health practitioners, hosted by the Department of Health Victoria on behalf of the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council (AHMAC), on 23 March. This forum is part of a national consultation process to seek feedback from the community about regulatory protections available to consumers who use the services of unregistered health practitioners. A consultation paper titled Options for regulation of unregistered health practitioners has been posted on the AHMAC website: www.ahmac.gov.au under 'Related Links'. The forum was attended by a disparate group of health practitioners and consumers which made for challenges in reaching consensus on many aspects of the discussion. To further complicate the matter the ANF representatives raised the issue of licensing of assistants in nursing, which constitute a cohort of health workers with very different regulatory issues. The ANF Federal Office is preparing a written submission to this consultation process.

> Australian Nursing & Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) forum

A Federal Office Professional Officer attended the ANMAC Information Forum held in Melbourne on 24 March. The aim of this forum was to update education providers conducting nursing and midwifery programs leading to registration or endorsement, and interested nurses, midwives and community members, on the development of the National Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Scheme. Attendees were encouraged to regularly visit the ANMAC website: <http://www.anmc.org.au/home> to keep up to date with documentation relating to accreditation. In addition, ANMAC made a plea for nurse and midwife clinicians interested in becoming accreditation assessors to contact the Director of Accreditation, Gordon Poulton at ANMAC on gpoulton@anmc.org.au

> Lead Clinicians Groups: Enhancing clinical engagement in Australia's health system

Last month Federal Office made a written submission to the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) on proposed Lead Clinicians Groups. On 21 March the Federal Office Professional Officers participated in a telephone interview with Ipsos- Eureka, consultants to DoHA assisting with collection of views on the structure and operations of 'lead clinician groups' to inform progress on developing the concept.

> Development of a Service Charter for Community Pharmacy

Federal Office was invited to participate in the formulation of a Service Charter for Community Pharmacy, being developed under the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement. Our letter response said that given the numbers of ANF members across all areas of the health and aged care sectors, our organisation has an intense interest in the quality use of medicines, including the supply and procurement of medicines and other therapeutic products from community pharmacies. In many instances, such as community and aged care settings or in rural areas, nurses and midwives work very closely with their community pharmacist colleagues. In addition, these nurses and midwives are often in a position of liaising between inpatients or community members and the local pharmacist. The charter "is expected to provide patients, consumers, carers and advocates information on the rights and responsibilities of consumers and pharmacists, and the service they can expect to receive when visiting a community pharmacy". The letter can be found at www.anf.org.au under 'Submissions'.

> Early Childhood Development

The ANF welcomed the opportunity to provide input into the Productivity Commission's study of the Early Childhood Development Workforce, specifically in relation to Maternal, Child and Family Health (MC&FH) nursing. In its submission the ANF stated strong support for an appropriately qualified maternal, child and family health nursing workforce which can work within a partnership philosophy to deliver positive outcomes in early childhood development for our communities. The paper highlighted that there are differing models of care delivery across the jurisdictions. The ANF contended that where there is evidence of strong positive outcomes for mothers and babies these models of care should be assessed for applicability more broadly. The models of educational preparation should also be supported which appropriately prepare MC&FH nurses to deliver care which will achieve the national agendas for improved early childhood development services. A number of recommendations were made for consideration by the Productivity Commission in its deliberations on the early childhood development workforce in Australia, particularly in relation to health care services. The full submission can be found at: www.anf.org.au.

> Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme

Having participated in the initial review of the Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme conducted for the Australian Government in 2009, the ANF followed up by recently reviewing the discussion paper released by the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) in February 2011 titled Aged Care Complaints Scheme: Proposed Complaints Management Framework. With a large cohort of members in the residential and community aged care sectors, the ANF has a genuine concern for the environment in which these nurses and assistants in nursing (however titled) practice, and for the well-being of the frail elderly people for whom they provide care. The ANF used this submission to continue to argue forcefully for the need to improve investment in the people and material resources in aged care in Australia, which would lead to enhanced quality of care and infrastructure, and ultimately less need for complaints. When there is a need for residents/their families/staff to lodge complaints, however, they must have access to a robust, and easy to navigate, investigation scheme. The ANF has been clear that the complaints body must have sufficient powers to make recommendations which can be enacted to make sustainable improvements to the aged care sector. The full submission can be found at: www.anf.org.au.

> National Rural Health Conference

The 11th National Rural Health Conference was held in Perth from 13-16 March 2011. This biennial event provides a valuable overview of the health issues facing those in the bush and brings together rural and remote consumers, clinicians, researchers and managers from around the country. Over 1,000 delegates attended this year's conference. Those attending were encouraged to submit recommendations for other delegates to consider, with an emphasis on feasible, affordable actions that will improve health and health service equity for people in rural and remote areas. In excess of 250 recommendations were received with a focus on rural mental health, preventing disease, innovation in workforce programs and ways in which technology can help support quality lifestyles in rural and remote areas. The 13 priority recommendations were presented to the Health Minister, Nicola Roxon prior to her closing address to the Conference. For further information on the conference and recommendations go to: www.nrha.ruralhealth.org.au.



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).

