



australian nursing federation

national news - july/august 2009

> Award Modernisation

Written submissions have been filed with the Commission in relation to Transitional Provisions for priority and Stage 2 modern awards including the Nurses Award. The Commission has listed further consultations commencing Monday 13 July 2009. The ANF Federal Office will attend the hearings and provide further submissions in relation to transitional matters concerning the new Nurses Award.

> Fair Work Act

The Fair Work Act commenced from 1 July 2009 replacing the Workplace Relations Act and WorkChoices. The new good faith bargaining, industrial action, right of entry, general protections, unfair dismissal and transmission of business laws operate from 1 July. The new laws regarding the safety net, (modern awards and national employment standards) will operate from 1 January 2010.

> Informatics Competency Standards Project

The ANF in conjunction with project partners Queensland University of Technology (QUT) is continuing work on an Australian Government funded national project to develop, validate and publish Informatics Competency Standards for the nursing profession in Australia. Telephone focus groups have been held to discuss participants' opinions and experiences about nursing informatics, to test some of the messages identified in the survey and to expand on and clarify some of the issues raised. Draft competency standards have been developed and will be circulated shortly to stakeholders for comment and feedback. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the draft competency standards please register your interest by emailing the ANF at itproject@anf.org.au.

> SEATO Nurses

The ANF has made a submission to the Review of Military Compensation Arrangements seeking recognition and access to entitlements under the Veterans Entitlements Act for civilian nurses who suffered illness or injury as a result of their service in Vietnam.

> Inquiry into the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives Bills 2009

A letter of submission was made to the Senate Economics Committee Inquiry into the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives Bill 2009, the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives (Medicare Levy Surcharge) Bill 2009 and the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives (Medicare Levy Surcharge – Fringe Benefits) Bill 2009 on 9 June 2009. The ANF strongly supports the proposed legislation to implement changes to private health insurance which will provide benefits for the majority of Australians and not just the higher income sector. A copy of this submission is available in the publications section of the ANF Federal Office website at www.anf.org.au.

> National Health Informatics Education Committee

A meeting of the full committee was held on 1 June 2009 with subsequent smaller meetings of working groups to progress specific work of the Committee.

The Acting Assistant Secretary, eHealth Branch of the Department of Health and Ageing, Dr Chris Mount, was present for the first part of the meeting and gave a clear indication of the support of the Department for the work of this Committee. In particular DoHA supports the approach being taken by the lead organisation, the Australian College of Health Informatics (ACHI) in including a wide range of stakeholder groups in

the Committee. Funding is currently being made available from DoHA for the secretariat of the Committee, until the end of the year.

Members voted to change the name of the Committee to Australian Health Informatics Education Council (AHIEC) so that it would be readily identifiable in international circles, and to indicate the collaborative nature of the group. There will be four co-Chairs, drawn from: Australian College of Health Informatics, Health Information Management Association of Australia, Health Informatics Society of Australia, and Health Level 7 Australia.

There are now two levels of groups involved in AHIEC: members of the stakeholder group which is quite large and some of the groups don't engage beyond being part of the distribution list for information; and the other are the members of the Council – those organisations who have shown commitment through input and consistent representation at each meeting. ANF is in the latter group in order to ensure that the nursing perspective is presented. The other nursing group is Nursing Informatics Australia. Work is currently being undertaken to develop a Strategic Work Plan which can be submitted to DoHA for on-going funding. ANF has been involved in small group work on this as well as within the broader group, the Council.

> Joint ANF/RCNA Pandemic Influenza Working Group

With the current swine flu situation in Australia, this group has increased its meeting frequency to monthly. Issues include:

- on-going promotion and distribution of the Joint Guideline on Influenza Pandemic, available from the ANF website www.anf.org.au;
- a watching brief on the status of Swine flu globally and nationally. The Minister for Health and Ageing has now declared that Australia has moved to a PROTECT phase. This new phase recognises that the infection with H1N1 Influenza (Swine flu) is not as severe as originally envisaged and that this new disease is mild in most cases, severe in some and moderate overall. The PROTECT phase sits alongside the CONTAIN and SUSTAIN phases and has a greater focus on vulnerable people

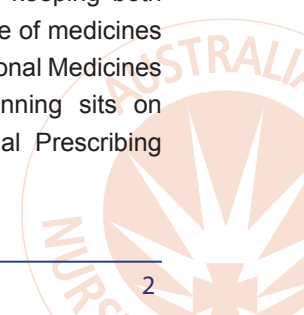
(pregnant women and those with respiratory disease, other chronic diseases or that are immunosuppressed) in whom the disease may have more severe outcomes;

- a letter writing campaign to the Secretary of the DoHA requesting nurse representation on the highest level decision making groups who inform national policy formulation on influenza pandemic planning; and the Chief Nurses of the States/Territories, requesting support for national representation and inclusion of nurses in their jurisdictional planning committees; and
- the possibility of developing a list of nurses who are expert in aspects of influenza pandemic, who could be called on for media or representational work.

An action from this group was the preparation of letters which have been sent to Ms Jane Halton, Secretary to the Department of Health and Ageing, requesting representation for nurses on the high level national committees which deal with the planning for and management of influenza pandemic in Australia. It was argued that our two organisations are well positioned to offer clinical insight and advice on specific practical issues to ensure the responses developed to an influenza pandemic are likely to be effective and can harness the expertise and skills of the largest section of the health workforce. A copy of the letter was sent to the Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer, Ms Rosemary Bryant to advise her of this action. Letters have also been sent to each of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers in the States/Territories to request involvement of nurses in local jurisdictional planning and management committees.

> Joint ANF/RCNA Quality Use of Medicines Working Group

This newly constituted group comprising staff from both organisations plus Professor Trisha Dunning and Dr Kay Price – both members of ANF and RCNA, will meet on a quarterly basis. The group has a two fold aim of keeping both organisations abreast of quality use of medicines issues being discussed by the National Medicines Policy Committee (Professor Dunning sits on this for nursing), and the National Prescribing



Service (Dr Price sits on the Board of NPS as a joint ANF/RCNA nominee); and of keeping these two nurses in touch with quality use of medicines issues within, or impacting on, the profession. The actions from the group will serve to strengthen advocacy work being undertaken in relation to the significant role of nurses and midwives in the quality use of medicines.

> **Joint ANMC/ANZCCN Project Steering Committee**

In May 2009, the ANF Federal Office was invited to participate as a member of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) / Australian and New Zealand Council of Chief Nurses (ANZCCN) Joint Project Steering Committee to develop processes for re-entry to the nursing and midwifery professions; and processes for self declaration of competence to practice. The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held in Canberra on 15 June 2009. The main function of this Committee will be to review and provide input to the draft processes before they are circulated more broadly to stakeholders, and to provide opinions on implementation strategies. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for late July with the project expected to be completed by November 2009.

The second face to face meeting of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC)/ Australian and New Zealand Council of Chief Nurses (ANZCCN) Joint Project Steering Committee was held in Canberra on 21 July 2009. This committee is reviewing and providing input to the draft processes for re-entry to the nursing and midwifery professions and draft national standards for self declaration of competence to practice before they are circulated more broadly to stakeholders. The draft documents will be available for comment on the ANMC website from mid August to mid September 2009. The project is expected to be completed by November 2009.

> **Australian General Practice Network Project Reference Group**

The final teleconference meeting of the AGPN Project Reference Group was held on 25 June 2009. The Project to develop a national Introduction to General Practice Program and Orientation Program for Nurses New to General

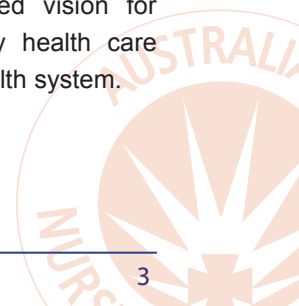
Practice funded by the DoHA commenced in May 2008 with the final report due to be submitted by 30 June 2009. Both programs have been piloted, one in Victoria and the other in New South Wales and Queensland. The Introduction to General Practice will be offered as a face to face program while the Orientation for Nurses New to General Practice will be offered either as a face to face or on-line program. These programs will be available more widely later in the year.

> **AHHA/ACHSE Policy Think Tank**

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association and the Australian College of Health Service Executives co-hosted a Policy Think Tank in Canberra on 29 May 2009. Draft papers and presentations were provided and concurrent workshops held on the governance of the health system, multi-purpose services and clinical handover. Workshops on each policy topic explored the key issues in the policy papers, priorities for recommendations and a forward advocacy plan for each policy. Further development of the draft policy papers will be undertaken to incorporate discussions and recommendations from the day.

> **Nursing Leadership Conference**

The ANF Federal Office presented a paper at the Nursing Leadership 2009 Conference held in Melbourne on 9-10 June 2009 and sponsored by the College of Nursing. The ANF paper by the Federal Professional Officers, titled 'Leadership in Collaboration' provided an overview of Primary Health Care in Australia: a nursing and midwifery consensus view, a project undertaken by the Primary Health Care Working Group. This project, funded by the DoHA, was supported by a significant number of peak nursing and midwifery organisations. The presentation illustrated the essential leadership role for nurses and midwives in advocating for a more equitable and accessible primary health care system for all Australians. It outlined how organisations with differing vested specialty nursing and midwifery interests have collaborated to espouse a unified vision for changes to the focus of primary health care funding and delivery within the health system.



> Primary Health Care Roundtable

Peak nursing, midwifery, medical and consumer groups met on 16 June 2009 for a primary health care roundtable at Parliament House, Canberra to discuss informing policy to guide health reform towards better health outcomes for the Australian community. Ged Kearney provided an overview of the Primary Health Care in Australia: a nursing and midwifery consensus view paper, followed by group discussion on the gaps and barriers to primary health care in Australia, what's working, and a plan for the way forward on the identified issues and models. There was strong support for discussing ways to enable the community to be better informed about health issues. Providing access to timely, effective, high quality, safe primary health care was a key outcome sought by all organisations and the involvement of collaborative teams of health care professionals to help facilitate the best health outcomes for all Australians. Medical, nursing and midwifery representatives were all committed to taking further steps together towards a collaborative approach in primary health care improvement and reform. The groups have agreed that a working group will meet in August 2009 made up of doctors, nurses, midwives and consumer representatives to progress the work on key areas of agreement. Following the roundtable, a joint communiqué was released which is available in the news section of the ANF Federal Office website at www.anf.org.au.

> Continuing Professional Education

Many of you might be aware of the Health Practitioners Regulation National Law, commonly known as National Registration and Accreditation which is due to be implemented in July 2010.

The recent Communiqué on national registration by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council states a requirement that for annual renewal of registration a registrant must demonstrate they have participated in a continuing professional development program.

It is believed that for the nursing profession, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Councils continuing competence framework will be adopted by the new National Nursing and Midwifery

Registration Board. This framework suggests nurses and midwives participate in at least 20 hours (points) of CPE per year with documentation of that CPE completed each year.

The ANF's formal CPE program assists you in maintaining your competence to practice by providing you with quality CPE along with a professional portfolio to record your evidence of CPE activities.

The ANF's CPE tutorials give you 5 points each equating to 5 hours for each tutorial completed. Just four tutorials will allow you to attain your 20 CPE points annually. www.anf.org.au/cpe

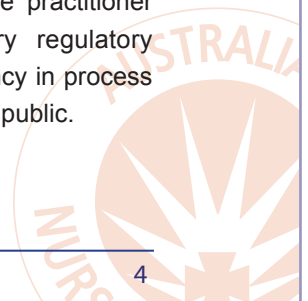
> National Women's Health Policy

A letter response was provided to the development of a new National Women's Health Policy in which it was argued that health policy should be centred around primary health care. Rather than take extracts from the recently developed document Primary Health Care in Australia: a nursing and midwifery consensus view, the entire document was forwarded urging policy makers to seriously consider the information contained therein in the development of policies for women's health.

> Health Legislation Amendment (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and related Bills (Midwife Professional Indemnity)

The ANF responded to an invitation to make a submission on this proposed Bill. Using our policy statement on nurse and midwife practitioners as a base, the ANF welcomed the proposed legislation which will enable these practitioners to undertake their role to its full potential. The ANF argued for parity in the processes leading to authorisation of midwife and nurse practitioners:

The ANF is concerned to institute a process for the preparation and endorsement of a midwife practitioner which assures the community and health care professional colleagues of a high standard of scholarly rigour coupled with clinical expertise. In addition, the ANF deems it critical that there be parity, between the process leading to conferring of nurse and midwife practitioner status by nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities for reasons of consistency in process in order to assure protection of the public.



The ANF has sought to be involved in:

- the development of details for implementation of the legislation, such as defining 'eligible' midwife and the criteria for authorisation as a midwife practitioner;
- the process that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Council will employ in determining 'the range of medicines that each group can prescribe'; and
- consultation on the development of the professional indemnity insurance cover for midwife practitioners.

The ANF submission to this proposed legislation is available under the publications section of the website.

> Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives Bill 2009 and two related Bills; and the Health Insurance Amendment (Extended Medicare Safety Net) Bill 2009

The ANF responded to an invitation to provide comment to the Inquiry into the Fairer Private Health Insurance Incentives Bill 2009 (at short notice) and a letter was submitted (found on ANF website: www.anf.org.au). Further to that, the ANF has prepared a submission to the Community Affairs Legislation Committee for the development of the draft legislation. The ANF has supported the implementation of such legislation which will ensure that those members of the community with a greater capacity to pay will make a larger contribution towards the cost of the private health insurance scheme in which they have opted to participate. It will also ensure that Australian Government support for private health insurance remains fair and sustainable in the future. The ANF considers that proposed changes to health insurance cover will enable citizens on higher incomes to fulfil their responsibility as members of a civil society.

In addition, the draft legislation will also enable the Minister for Health and Ageing to determine a cap on the Extended Medicare Safety Net (EMSN) benefit payable and ensure that the mechanism is flexible and responsive to changes in circumstances that impact on the EMSN. The setting of the EMSN in a legislative instrument means that it will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny and thus gives greater assurance of protection of the public.

> Performance of Public and Private Hospital Systems

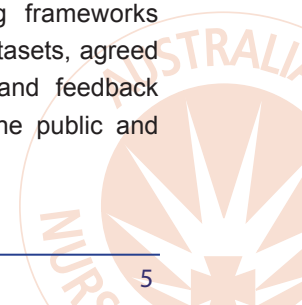
The Productivity Commission is undertaking a study into the performance of public and private hospital systems. Specifically, the Commission has been asked to examine and report on the relative performance of the public and private hospital systems, and related data issues.

The study aims to look at:

- Comparative efficiency: indicators and data sources; clinically similar procedures.
- Hospital-acquired infections: which infections to report and data sources.
- Multivariate analysis: rationale and methodology; data requirements.
- Informed financial consent and Medicare Levy Surcharge.

The ANF was invited to join a select group of experts and interested parties in a roundtable discussion in Canberra hosted by the Productivity Commission as an initial phase in the study. Further to that a submission has been prepared in which the ANF voiced concern at the incredibly short timeframe that has been allocated to this study and our misgivings then for the quality and applicability of the resultant data and report. Acknowledging that the study represents a significant and important body of work, with a substantial amount of information being sought, the ANF has urged the Productivity Commission to consider seeking an extension of the completion date. From the discussion at the roundtable attended by the ANF it was obvious that this view was shared by people who have considerable experience in the field of hospital data collection and analysis.

The Productivity Commission's issues paper refers to the Government's commitment to improving transparency, accountability and performance reporting within the health system. This is laudable and what the citizens of this country deserve and would want their Government to be serious about. However, that commitment needs to incorporate a sense of the need to develop supporting frameworks such as standardised reporting datasets, agreed definitions, realistic timeframes, and feedback mechanisms, applicable across the public and private sectors.



The next stage in the study is that the ANF, as a roundtable participant, will be sent a copy of the draft report by the Productivity Commission in late September 2009.

The ANF submission to this proposed legislation is available under the publications section of the website.

> National Prescribing Service

The ANF participated in a review of the National Prescribing Service governance structures undertaken by Cameron Ralph, a leading corporate governance consultant. This company has been engaged by NPS to explore the views of members to find out how well members feel the current governance structures and processes of NPS are working.

> Core Competencies for Maternity Services in Australia

An on-line survey of the draft core competencies for maternity services was conducted and the ANF provided general and specific comments to aid in the development of the final competency content and structure.

> Nurse Educators in Acute Care Hospitals Project (NEACH)

The ANF, as part of the NEACH Steering Committee, participated in a pilot phase of an on-line survey for nurse educators. A call is being put out to all those undertaking a nurse educator role across the country to contribute to the project through a national survey. Nurses can register their interest by emailing their name, organisation and professional designation to Jan Sayers, the Project co-ordinator, on jan.sayers@postgrad.curtin.edu.au. Registration is open until 30 August 2009.

> IMPACT Journal

The ANF is a member of the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) and as such was asked to participate in an on-line survey regarding the official journal of ACOSS – IMPACT. The aim of the survey is to ascertain views of the readers on the content and usage of the journal within organisations and insights into changes which could enhance the publication for the future.

> National Medicines Policy Partnerships Forum

The ANF was invited to attend the National Medicines Policy Partnerships Forum (the Forum), held at Old Parliament House, Canberra, along with representatives from a wide range of health professional, consumer, pharmaceutical industry, government – federal and jurisdictional, and related organisation interest groups.

The Forum forms part of the new National Medicines Policy advisory arrangements approved by the Minister for Health and Ageing last year. The new structure consists of:

- National Medicines Policy Executive
- National Medicines Policy Committee
- Annual National Medicines Policy Partnership Forum

The Forum is the last plank in the new framework to be implemented, a framework based on partnerships. This then continues the framework of the National Medicines Policy first released in 1999. The aim of this policy is better health outcomes for all Australians through quality use of medicines. The aim of the day was to collect input from participants on information relevant to the quality use of medicines to sharpen the focus for priority setting by the National Medicines Executive Committee.

Three broad themes were outlined and discussions centred on the points identified under each as follows:

Theme 1:

- Supporting appropriate use of medicines
- Medication adherence (monitor, assess, inform decisions)
- Appropriate processes
- Medication pathway
- Evidence of informed decisions
- Continuity of care
- Informed and active consumers (health literacy)

Theme 2:

- Generating evidence
- Converging technologies
- Internationalisation of health technology
- Post-market monitoring



- Off label use of medicines
- Influencing public research agenda
- Clinical trial relevance

Theme 3: Supporting the system

- Future models of health care delivery
- Competency standards
- Equity of access
- Timely access to new medicines
- System sustainability
- Stimulating/reward for innovation

> Reforms to Carer Payment

In the 2008-09 Budget, the Australian Government announced a range of measures to significantly improve the support and assistance available for carers of children with severe disability or severe medical conditions. The measures included improving access to Carer Payment for carers of children aged under 16 years. Carer Payment is an income support payment for carers who, because of the demands of their caring role, are unable to support themselves through substantial paid employment.

These reforms will be passed and come into effect from 1 July 2009. The most significant change is to the way a carer can qualify for Carer Payment. There will be a new assessment process that addresses the carer's perspective on the care load impact. The new treating health professional questionnaire will be used to assess the child's level of functional impairment, with reference to age appropriate standards across the domains of behaviour, every day needs and special care needs. The current assessment form used by Medical Practitioners will be replaced by a new application process that can be completed by a range of treating health professionals. Once the reforms are introduced the additional health professions that can assist with the carer payment processes will be:

- registered nurses
- physiotherapists
- occupational therapists
- clinical psychologists and
- Aboriginal health workers in geographically remote areas

These changes acknowledge the important role that a wide range of health professionals have in working closely with carers and will improve carer access to income support. The ANF attended an information session provided by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA) in relation to these reforms in Canberra on 22 July 2009. The ANF will continue to provide information about these Carer Payment reforms to members.

> Healthcare identifiers and privacy regulation

The ANF attended an invitation consultation forum on 29 July 2009 regarding proposed legislative arrangements for healthcare identifiers and privacy. The Council of the Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to the development and implementation of unique healthcare identifiers for healthcare consumers, providers and provider organisations, to support the development of the national e-health agenda. The legislative framework to underpin implementation of healthcare identifiers and the establishment of appropriate national privacy arrangements for health information is currently being developed collaboratively by Commonwealth, state and territory health departments. Forums such as this one attended by the ANF will contribute to the development of the legislative arrangements to protect the privacy of personal information while achieving the healthcare benefits that can be gained through better sharing of health information. The ANF will also be making a written submission to this process.

> Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS)

The policy manager from ACOSS met with members of the ANF policy team to discuss issues of mutual concern relating to policy work on social justice. One of the items discussed was the ANF's involvement as a collaborative partner, in a project undertaken by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH). The project Improving the Patient Journey: achieving positive outcomes for remote Aboriginal cardiac patients, was the brainchild of Monica Lawrence, an Adelaide-based cardiac nurse. With a team of researchers, and under the auspice of the

CRCAH, Monica studied the special needs of Aboriginal patients from remote areas, when interacting with the health system, in relation to cardiac surgery. The outcome of this action research was improved arrangements for travel to and from the hospital for life-saving cardiac surgery, improved clinical/cultural liaison, and greatly improved patient health outcomes.

> **Medical Technology Association of Australia**

The Medical Technology Association of Australia represents the manufacturers and distributors of medical products that support the needs of sub-acute patients. MTAA has met with the ANF to discuss their draft policy paper that proposes a scheme to enable more equitable and consistent patient access to medical products that support quality of life and/or patient survival. The ANF is supportive of a scheme that will provide funded access by patients to medical products that might not presently be readily accessible, or when available are provided at considerable cost to the patient because they are not subsidised. The ANF will continue to work with MTAA in the development of their proposed policy.



GED KEARNEY
Federal Secretary

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LEE THOMAS
Assistant Federal Secretary

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

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).