



# australian nursing federation

national news - november - december 2009



The ANF Federal Office would like to wish you all a safe and happy festive season and best wishes for 2010.

## > Award modernisation

In late September the AIRC decided that the safety net of wages and conditions of nurses who work in Aboriginal community controlled health services will be set by the modern Nurses Award made earlier this year, not by a separate award specific to health services. The ANF opposed an application that would have result in nurses working in health services being covered by a different, possibly disadvantageous, award to other non public-sector nurses in Australia.

## > Model OHS Laws

The Workplace Relations Ministers Council, comprising ministers with responsibility for OHS matters from each State and Territory as well as the Commonwealth, recently released draft Model Occupational Health and Safety Laws for public comment. It is intended that, when finalised, the model OHS laws will be adopted by each State and Territory by the end of 2011. The ANF and other unions are concerned that the drafting of the laws is such that the highest OHS standards and rights for Australian workers will not be implemented and instead existing entitlements will be watered down. The ANF, along with the ACTU and other unions, will be making submissions that the draft laws must be improved significantly in order to achieve improved OHS laws across Australia. ANF members have also participated in several public rallies around the country to demand that governments not implement second-rate health and safety laws.

## > State referral of industrial powers

There have been some recent developments on the referral by states of their industrial powers to the Commonwealth. While the position of Western Australia remains unclear New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and Victoria have referred or taken steps to refer or have announced an intention to do so.

On 25 November the NSW Government introduced the Industrial Relations (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2009, to refer private sector and publicly owned utilities to the national IR system to the State Parliament.

### South Australia:

On 9 September 2009 the South Australian Government introduced the Fair Work Commonwealth Powers Bill 2009 into the South Australian Parliament. That Bill was passed by the South Australian House of Assembly on 13 October and is currently before the Legislative Council.

### Tasmania:

On 7 October 2009 the Tasmanian Government introduced the Industrial Relations Commonwealth Powers Bill 2009 into the Tasmanian Parliament. The Tasmanian Bill was passed by the Tasmanian House of Assembly on 14 October and by the Legislative Council on 28 October.

### Queensland:

In October 2009 the Fair Work (Commonwealth Powers) and Other Provisions Bill was introduced into the Queensland parliament. The Bill refers industrial powers to allow the Commonwealth to cover unincorporated employers and employees in the private sector.

### The Commonwealth:

The Commonwealth government has introduced the Fair Work Amendment (State Referrals and Other Measures) Bill 2009 into parliament to support the referrals of power these States. The Bill, amongst other things, provides for the preservation of state awards (called Division 2B State reference transitional awards) for a period of 12 months after the referral.

#### > Pay Equity Report 'Making it Fair'

On 23 November the parliamentary standing committee on employment and workplace relations tabled a report into pay equity between male and females. The tabling of the report followed an 18 month enquiry, over 150 submissions and public hearings in every state and territory. The report concluded that gender based pay was alive and well in Australia (and in fact widening) and that many female workers, including nurses, fared badly.

The Report recommends a range of initiatives to positively address these issues including:

- 18 recommendations to change the Fair Work Act 2009 including establishing a specialist pay equity unit within the tribunal as a central point for pay equity monitoring, development and application of pay equity audits, and development of pay equity plans; and provide specialist assistance in award modernisation;
- enabling the Sex Discrimination Commissioner to commence self-initiated complaints for breaches of the Act; and
- enabling the Human Rights Commission to commence legal action in the Federal Magistrates Court or Federal Court for a breach of the Sex Discrimination Act.

The government has yet to publically respond to the recommendations. A full copy of the Report is available at [www.aph.gov.au/ewr](http://www.aph.gov.au/ewr).

#### > Coalition of National Nursing Organisation's

The Coalition of National Nursing Organisation's (CoNNO) held their second face to face meeting of the year in Sydney on 9 October. Guest speakers were Peter Fleming, CEO of the National e-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) and Chris Baggoley, CEO of the Australian

Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC). Belinda Moyes, Chair of the Australian and New Zealand Council of Chief Nursing Officers attended the meeting. The program included a Council report from the Chair and Secretariat, member reports and workshops on survey monkey and credentialing. Details of the guest speaker's presentations and minutes of the meeting are available on the CoNNO website at [www.conno.org.au](http://www.conno.org.au). The next CoNNO member meeting will be held in Melbourne in May 2010.

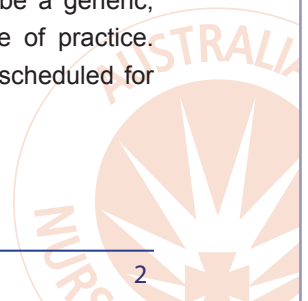
#### > Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) - Nurse Practitioner Technical Advisory Group (NPTAG)

Meetings of the MBS Nurse Practitioner Technical Advisory Group have been held on 13 October and 13 November 2009. The ANF was represented at these meetings where the issues surrounding nurse practitioner access to the MBS, eligibility, collaboration, referral, pathology and diagnostic imaging services were discussed. The ANF is supporting the position that:

- a) eligibility is based on authorisation / endorsement as a nurse practitioner as determined by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia;
- b) collaborative arrangements are based on broad principles of responsibility and accountability, coordination, communication, cooperation, autonomy and mutual trust and respect; and
- c) referrals, pathology and diagnostic imaging services are undertaken as appropriate within the nurse practitioner's scope of practice.

#### > Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) - Nurse Practitioner Technical Advisory Group (NPTAG)

The first meeting of the PBS Nurse Practitioner Technical Advisory Group was held on 16 October 2009. The purpose of this group is to provide advice to the Department of Health and Ageing on the access to the schedule of PBS medicines by nurse practitioners. The ANF is supporting the positions that the approach taken to PBS prescribing by nurse practitioners be a generic, unrestricted approach within scope of practice. The next meeting of this group is scheduled for 19 November 2009.



> Medicare Benefits Scheme (MBS) – Midwifery Technical Advisory Group

The MTAG has met twice and the ANF was represented at both meetings. The agenda as set by the Department of Health and Ageing covered issues regarding the eligibility criteria for midwives, the MBS scheduled rebates and a definition of collaboration.

The ANF positions that will be advised to the Midwifery Services Advisory Group are likely to be:

1. Eligibility criteria will consist of:
  - a) a registered midwife
  - b) competent across the continuum of care (antenatal, postnatal and intra partum)
  - c) have experience in low risk and high risk births
  - d) equivalent to a minimum of 3 years full time midwifery care post registration
  - e) have experience in midwifery led models of care
  - f) in addition a further qualification, appropriate credential or other requirement is likely to be required and will be determined by the Nursing and midwifery board of Australia
  - g) grandfathering provisions will be considered
  - h) ongoing eligibility will be determined by the national board
2. Collaborative practice definition will include:
  - a) a midwife will have collaborative arrangements in place with GP/Obstetricians and /or with hospitals that provide maternity services
3. MBS Items will include:
  - a) care plan consultation
  - b) short antenatal visit (less than 40 minutes)
  - c) long antenatal visit (more than 40 minutes)
  - d) labour and delivery
  - e) incomplete labour and delivery
  - f) short postnatal visit (less than 40 minutes)
  - g) long postnatal visit (more than 40 minutes)
  - h) six week postnatal visit
  - i) 32-36 week obstetric visit

> Pharmaceuticals Benefits Scheme PBS Midwifery Technical Advisory Group

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme outcomes, broad discussion was part of this meeting and an agreement was made that a limited list of drugs that midwives could access should include antibiotics, pain relief and a narrow assortment of other drugs.

> Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia Editorial Committee

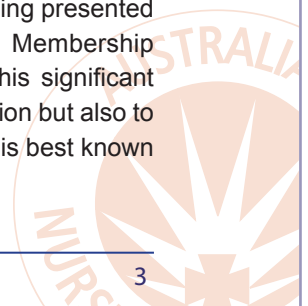
The Federal Office has been invited to provide input to a new publication being developed by the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia (SHPA). SHPA was approached by the pharmacy department of the Royal Adelaide Hospital to publish a document they had produced in-house on an ongoing basis to a wider audience. The comprehensive publication is a Guide to medication administration for patients with swallowing difficulties or with enteral feeding tubes. This document is undergoing revision to ensure it is applicable to a variety of clinical settings.

> Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMNH) Conference

The Federal Office staff attended the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses 35th International Conference Mind to Care in Sydney from 29 September to 2 October. Keynote speakers included: Rosemary Bryant, Commonwealth Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer; Professor Gail Stuart, Medical University of South Carolina, USA; Allison Kokany, Chair of the NSW Consumer Advisory Group, Sydney and Independent Mental Health Consumer Consultant; Professor Dawn Freshwater, Head of School at the School of Healthcare, University of Leeds, UK; Professor Maxwell Bennett, Brain and Mind Research Institute, University of Sydney; Professor Kathleen Delaney, Rush College of Nursing Chicago, Illinois, USA; and Dr Eng Kong Tan, Consultant Psychiatrist, Analytical Psychotherapist and Chairman of Metta Clinic, Pymble, Sydney. A varied scientific program and workshops were on offer across the four days. For the first time, this conference featured a two day symposium targeted specifically to nurses and midwives working outside of the mental health field, and undergraduate and postgraduate students.

> Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association 2009 Congress

The ANF Federal Office was represented on day two of the Congress which included some interesting speakers. The Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Federal Minister for Health and Ageing presented the AHHA 2009 Honorary Life Membership award to Dr John Deeble AO for his significant contribution to not only the Association but also to the healthcare sector generally. He is best known



for being a co-formulator of the original universal health care insurance scheme in 1968. Following a brief address the Minister conducted one of her open consultation sessions on the current health reform agenda.

#### > CRANApplus Conference

The 27th National Conference of CRANApplus, the professional body for remote and isolated practice was held in Alice Springs from 14 -17 October 2009. The conference began with the official launch of the recently expanded Council of Remote Area Nurses of Australia, now known as CRANApplus. Changes to the organisations constitution at the 2008 AGM opened membership beyond nursing to all practitioners delivering health care to remote and isolated areas of Australia. The Hon Warren Snowdon, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery addressed the delegates at the opening ceremony and commended CRANApplus on their work in advocating for remote health practitioners all over Australia.

#### > Australian College of Nurse Practitioners (ACNP) Conference

The ANF attended the launch of the Nurse Practitioner Online Educational Modules by Professor Sandra Dunn and Lynn Weekes, CEO of the National Prescribing Service at the welcome reception of the ACNP Conference. This conference was held from 28-30 October at the Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre in Darling Harbour. The Federal Office provided a trade display for the conference delegates.

#### > Cultural Awareness Training

The professional team joined with other staff from the Federal Office to participate in a cultural awareness training day conducted by the Koori Heritage Trust, Melbourne. In learning about the history of the traditional custodians of the land in Melbourne and broader Victoria, we gained valuable insights into our own heritage as Australians. We gained a greater understanding too, of the impact of culture and history on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in today's society. This training day is the enactment of Item 2.2 of the ANF Federal Office Reconciliation Action Plan.

#### > Productivity Commission Roundtable

The ANF was again invited to a roundtable meeting at the Productivity Commission, on 22 October, to discuss the findings to date of the study on public and private hospital systems. The recently released discussion paper Public and Private Hospitals, formed the basis for the consultation on the day. A final report will be produced by the Commission mid December 2009.

#### > National Women's Health Policy Consultation Forum

A representative from ANF Federal Officer participated in the National Women's Health Policy consultation forum in Melbourne on 27 October 2009. This is part of the extensive consultation process being undertaken by the Department of Health and Ageing in the development of a national women's health policy.

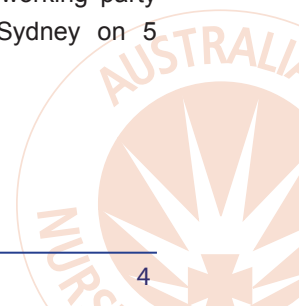
#### > Cinahl Nursing Research Database

ANF members and staff now have access to the Cinahl database of nursing literature. Cinahl is a powerful research tool that will assist nurses and midwives in their work and study. This database is available through your ANF State or Territory Branch office.

#### > National Health Workforce Planning and Research Collaboration – Acute Care Nursing Working Party

The National Health Workforce Planning and Research Collaboration has been established to undertake various health workforce research and planning projects. It is a collaboration of the National Health Workforce Taskforce, PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Australian Health Workforce Institute. A panel of experts has been formed to oversee the Acute Care Nursing Project. The working party consists of key stakeholders from the government, the profession, consumers, the education and training sector and individuals with specific expertise in nursing.

The ANF has a nominee on the working party which held its first meeting in Sydney on 5 November.



> ANMC Project to develop standards and criteria for the accreditation of re-entry to practice courses

The second meeting for the project being conducted by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council to develop standards and criteria for the accreditation of re-entry to practice courses, was held in Canberra on 24 November 2009. The meeting considered the draft literature review and commenced work on the detail of the draft standards and criteria. The committee has re-focussed its work from the broader issue of 'return to practice', to that of 're-entry' to practice – that is, the cohort of nurses who have been out of the workforce for more than five years and less than ten years and who therefore need to be assessed by a nurse and midwifery regulatory body for eligibility to re-enter the register. An additional meeting has been scheduled for mid-December to accommodate the amount of work to be undertaken to complete the draft standards and criteria. The ANF is pleased to be participating in this important work which is long overdue in bringing standardisation to the courses for re-entry to practice being offered across the country.

> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Care 2009

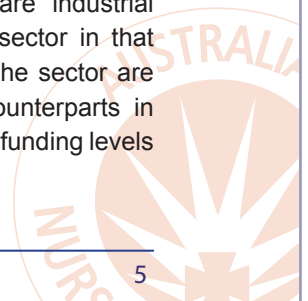
This conference, held over the 25 and 26 of November 2009, provided a great overview of the Council of Australian Government's (COAGs) Framework for Closing the Gap, and the various national action plans under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, for implementing strategies across the Framework's seven building blocks: early childhood, health, healthy homes, safe communities, schooling, economic participation, governance and leadership. Brian Gleeson, the newly appointed Australian Government Co-ordinator General told participants of his work in heading up the Office of the Co-ordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services which will drive the implementation of the COAG Reforms. He will shortly be providing his first report to government following extensive travel to consult with 29 priority Indigenous communities, and this will be available on [www.cgris.gov.au](http://www.cgris.gov.au) These programs, and the funding investment, give promise of improvements for Indigenous health and the social determinants of health for these people. The ANF will need to keep a watching brief, as well as participating wherever

it can, to ensure that work DOES happen, and in a culturally appropriate way.

> ACOSS Future of the Sector Forum

As a member organisation of the Australian Council of Social Services, the ANF participated in a one day forum on the future of the not-for-profit sector, held in Sydney on 12 November 2009. The focus of discussions was the recently released Productivity Commission (PC) draft report into the contribution of the not-for-profit sector, which can be found on the PC website: <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/not-for-profit> This focus of this study is on: improving the measurement of the sector's contributions, and removing obstacles to maximising its contributions to society. Some of the issues raised were:

- the need to change the culture of government to get reform into the not-for-profit sector, and also the attitude of the media to the sector;
- the sector should not be thought of as 'spill overs' as is referred to in the draft PC report. There is significant skill and knowledge in the sector which should be used by government to more directly impact on the community than utilising private consultants who don't have the same level of engagement with the lower socio-economic sub-groups in the community;
- support for the recommendation in the draft PC report for an independent centre for community service effectiveness, and a national registrar for community and charitable purposes as they have in New Zealand;
- the challenge for the Henry Tax Review (report due to be released Christmas Eve!) is to institute reforms which will deliver greater revenue to pay for the foreseeable increases in funding needed in the future for the ageing population needs;
- tax systems should support social policy NOT determine it;
- either choose to relegate the lower socio-economic sector to being a lower class in our society or support/advocate for social policy which enables these people to live a life more of their choosing; and
- of interest to a union there are industrial issues within the not-for-profit sector in that employees of organisations in the sector are paid considerably less than counterparts in private organisations, due to the funding levels



in the government contracts. The ACOSS is developing an Award Modernisation fact sheet which will shortly be posted to their website.

This forum highlighted the importance of ANF continuing to be a member organisation of ACOSS to keep abreast of, and participate in, the shaping of social policy in this country.

> **Health Workforce Public Lecture**

The Federal Office attended a public lecture given by visiting UK academic Professor James Buchan from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health Care, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, United Kingdom. The lecture was hosted by the Australian Health Workforce Institute at the University of Melbourne on 12 November 2009. The focus of the lecture was on health workforce self-sufficiency in a time of global financial crisis and whether this is indeed desirable or achievable. Professor Buchan is a Policy Associate at the WHO European Observatory on Health Systems and a visiting professor at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

> **NPS Members Planning Day**

The ANF attended the Annual General Meeting of the National Prescribing Service (NPS), as a member organisation, held on 20 November 2009. The important role which NPS plays in the national quality use of medicines agenda, has been recognised by the Government in its granting of a further five year funding for NPS operations. The AGM was followed by a members planning day forum at which participants heard from speakers from the Department of Health and Ageing, the National Medicines Policy Committee, and the National E-Health Transition Authority

on policies and initiatives to build on the quality of medicines (QUM) work of the past decade. The ANF works closely with the nurse who is a Director on the NPS Board and provides support to that position, as well as advising the NPS staff of ways to better engage nurses and midwives in the work of the Service in promoting QUM.

> **Healthcare Identifiers Stakeholder Forum**

The Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) in partnership with the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) held a healthcare identifiers stakeholder briefing forum in Canberra on 20 November 2009. This forum was held to provide an overview of the design and implementation of the proposed Healthcare Identifiers Service (HIS); an update on the feedback from the previous consultations; and an outline of the revised legislative proposals to establish the HIS. The Federal Office attended the briefing where Fran Thorn, Chair of the National E-Health Information Principal Committee and Secretary of DHS Victoria provided the feedback from the July to August consultations on healthcare identifiers and privacy. Robert Whitehead, Director of E-Health Policy at the Department of Health and Families in the Northern Territory presented a case study of the HIS in practice using a DVD filmed in the Northern Territory and South Australia. NEHTA's Chief Executive, Peter Fleming discussed the Concept of Operations for HIS document detailing the three Privacy Impact Assessments relating to the HIS along with NEHTA recommendations and responses. This document is now available on the NEHTA website at [www.nehta.gov.au](http://www.nehta.gov.au). Rosemary Huxtable, Acting Deputy Secretary, DoHA provided an overview of the legislative proposals and an update document was provided.



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).

