



> Award Modernisation

In response to a request by the ANF the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) has scheduled an award modernisation conciliation conference for the health and welfare industry on 19 August 2008. The conference will be the first opportunity since the AIRC decision of 20 June 2008 for all interested parties to advise the AIRC on their view as to their preferred approach to nursing and other awards. Prior to the conciliation conference the Federal Office will convene a teleconference of Branches.

All state and territory Branches of the ANF have now been briefed on the possible and potential outcomes if the ANF position of an occupation award is not supported by the employers. To that end Nick Blake and Lee Thomas have met with Catholic Health Australia, Aged and Community Services Australia and Aged Care Association Australia to establish their respective positions on the issue.

> Review of 457 Visa scheme

As part of its general review of skilled temporary migration arrangements the Federal Government is reviewing the integrity of the 457 program.

Industrial aspects of the integrity review will be conducted by Barbara Deegan (an AIRC Commissioner) and will address:

- the minimum salary level and labour agreements;
- the English language requirements;
- labour market testing; and
- occupational health and safety arrangements.

Barbara Deegan is required to make recommendations to the Minister by October 2008 and such recommendations will form part of government's consideration of broad reforms to the 457 visa program.

> Occupational health and safety

The ANF lodged a submission to the Federal Government-appointed panel which will make recommendations on the content of model national occupational health and safety (OH&S) laws. The ANF supported the ACTU submission to the panel and supported strong OH&S laws to protect nurses from hazards including stress, manual handling, needlestick injuries and blood borne pathogens. The panel is required to provide the first part of its report to state and federal governments by 31 October 2008.

> McKesson Asia-Pacific health call centres

The ANF has been seeking to negotiate a union collective agreement with McKesson Asia-Pacific Pty Ltd, which was recently awarded the long-term contract to run the National Health Call Centre Network, publicly known as *HealthDirect* (or *Nurse-on-Call* in Victoria). When fully operational, anybody in Australia will be able to ring the Network for health advice and information from registered nurses. Prior to the awarding of the contract McKesson already operated call centres in several states, and has now recently employed staff to operate centres in NSW and South Australia. McKesson has indicated its intention to develop a non-union agreement to set the pay and conditions of its nursing staff; however the ANF is seeking to meet with McKesson on behalf of nurses who have expressed a clear preference for a union-negotiated agreement.

> ANF awards and agreements database

The Federal Office is currently involved in the development of a new database for ANF awards and agreements to support Branch and Federal Office information and research capabilities. The first stage will be the establishment of an online

document library to provide access to all awards, agreements and other associated documents such as memorandums of understanding, side agreements or other relevant information.

> Nurses' paycheck

The next issue of nurses' paycheck will be available on the ANF website from 1 September 2008. This edition updates wages information as at 1 September 2008 and includes a new page providing an overview of residential aged care services and the employment of nursing staff. In its' Nurses paycheck is now freely available online at www.anf.org.au and has attracted 6,924 downloads in its' first month.

> National registration and accreditation

National registration and accreditation professions reference group continues to meet regularly. As a result the Australian Peak Nursing and Midwifery Forum is holding a workshop in mid August to respond to many of the unknowns as yet to be decided, for example what should the composition of the national board be?, how many terms should one be eligible to serve on the board? and should remuneration be part of the arrangements for board members? The first stage of the legislation will be passed through the Queensland Parliament in late 2008, with a second piece being put before the Parliament in 2009.

> Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI)

ACFI industry reference group met in July and discussed the ongoing evaluation of the implementation of ACFI. During this meeting there was discussion indicating chapter five of the RCS manual was being updated to reflect the implementation of ACFI and by January 2009 there was a plan to reduce the RCS program and to rely completely on ACFI appraisals.

> Prescribing and ordering of diagnostics for Nurse Practitioners

Several meetings have been held over the past month to obtain more information regarding the process and chances of success in moving forward with the prescribing and ordering of diagnostics for Nurse Practitioners. Several very successful

meetings have been attended with a clear way forward demonstrated by both the Medicare Benefits branch and the Pharmacy branch of the Department of Health and Ageing. The ANF will now proceed to work on documentation that will be used to pursue these matters.

> Medicare levy

The Federal Secretary and Assistant Federal Secretary were invited to give evidence at a hearing of the Senate Inquiry into the Tax Laws Amendment (Medicare Levy Surcharge Thresholds) Bill. ANF is of the view that increasing the Medicare levy threshold would not adversely affect the numbers of people who used the public hospital system nor would it lead to a mass exodus from private health insurance.

> Australian Red Cross Blood Service

Australian Red Cross Blood Service negotiations regarding workforce design continue with little progress being made on a resolution of the issues. Meetings will continue with high member activity from most states being a feature.

> The Hon Nicola Roxon MP

The Federal Secretary and Assistant Federal Secretary met with The Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Minister for Health and Ageing in July and had a very useful meeting regarding MBS and PBS issues as well as a discussion regarding Holmsglen TAFE.

> Health reform

The ANF met with the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission at a formal stakeholder meeting in July. The issues discussed were that of primary health care, with the Commission keen to hear views from the ANF on nursing roles in primary health care; education and training; and aged care.

> Branch Conferences

The Federal Secretary and Assistant Federal Secretary have attended Branch conferences in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria.



> Health workforce

The ANF Federal Office met with project officers from the National Health Workforce Taskforce (NHWT) in July to discuss proposals for pilot projects of innovative models of care. The NHWT is a national body created under the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) committee structures and reports directly to the Chair of AHMAC's Health Workforce Principal Committee. The NHWT is working on national workforce projects in the areas of research, planning and data in which new national data sets are being developed for the health workforce; a range of projects in relation to education and training, including the development of recommendations on effective, sustainable approaches to the delivery and organisation of clinical training in all health professions (involving all jurisdictions and education providers); the development of core competencies for the health workforce; and innovation and reform projects which will include calling for stakeholders to identify and apply for formal evaluation of pilot projects or new models of service delivery to support health workforce redesign. Branches are encouraged to begin to identify projects of service delivery models to nominate for formal evaluation when the NHWT calls for nominations in a few months time. The purpose of this is to allow for 'comprehensive documentation of the nature and impact of the pilot health workforce reform projects that have significant potential for national uptake'. For further information see the NHWT website: www.nhwt.gov.au/index.asp.

> Meetings with PBS branch

The ANF Federal Secretary, Assistant Federal Secretary and Federal Professional Officer met with the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule (PBS) branch of the Department of Health and Ageing to discuss legislative and policy changes required to allow nurse prescribing. There is a recent precedent for the addition of categories of health professions to the list of prescribers in the *National Health Act*, with optometrists added in 2008. The ANF Federal Office will continue to explore political support for the initiative.

> Rural health workforce

The ANF met with other key stakeholders from the rural and remote health sector last month to discuss health reform and models of care and the need for reform to support multi-disciplinary health service delivery to improve access to services for people in the bush. The meeting was attended by The Hon Nicola Roxon's senior advisor Ruth Kearon and by several of the Commissioners from the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. The meeting was productive, with all organisations agreeing to work together to try and establish an agreed framework to outline a consensus position on models of care to assist the group in advocating a collective position to some of the bodies currently involved in strategic reform e.g. the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. It was agreed this work would continue under the auspices of the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) of whom most participants were members, and would be placed on the agenda at the next NRHA Council meeting in August.

> National Nursing Research Symposium

The Coalition of National Nursing Organisations (CoNNO – formerly NNO, for whom ANF Federal Office manages the Secretariat) is holding a National Nursing Research Symposium in Melbourne on 22 August 2008. The Symposium is attracting a lot of interest and promises to be a fantastic event, featuring the ANF Federal Secretary. The Keynote Address will be delivered by prominent nursing researcher Professor Simon Stewart from the Baker Heart Research Institute on 'Building capacity in nursing to undertake research'; and there will be Panel Discussions on 'Models for turning practice into research' and 'Getting recognition and policy action from nursing research'. The symposium panels and three workshops available on the day will feature some of Australia's most expert nurse researchers, academics and advocates including Dr Sarah Winch, Professor Anne Gardner, Professor Sandy Middleton, Professor John Daly, Professor Christine Duffield, Dr Stephanie Fox-Young, Professor Glenn Gardner, Dr Bridget Hamilton, Dr Amanda Rischbieth and Professor Desley Hegney. The program and registration forms are available at www.conno.org.au.

> Professional Standards

The Federal Office submitted a response to draft three of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) National Continuing Competence Framework in July. The submission is available on the federal office website. Draft three of the framework still includes the mandatory minimum specified hours for both Continuing Professional Development and practice that the ANF has opposed in previous drafts. The Federal Secretary and Assistant Federal Secretary met with the ANMC in July to discuss the ANF concerns, particularly the mandatory requirements and subsequent potential workforce implications of the framework. Following a robust discussion a decision is still pending from the ANMC.

The ANMC is currently undertaking a project to develop standards and criteria for the accreditation of nursing and midwifery courses leading to registration, enrolment, endorsement and authorisation in Australia. The Steering Committee for the project is made up of representatives from each state and territory nursing and midwifery regulatory authority, the higher education and vocational education sector and national professional nursing and midwifery organisations and groups to provide guidance and direction to the project consultant on the development of the standards and criteria. Four working groups of the Steering Committee have developed four profession specific documents (registered nurses, midwives, enrolled nurses and nurse practitioners). Whilst there are generic standards common to the four documents, there are also profession specific components which have been developed following extensive discussions with representatives from each of the four groups. This work is Draft three of the Accreditation Standards project. The ANMC is currently seeking feedback from the Steering Committee on these four documents. These documents have been circulated to the ANF Professional Advisory Committee for comment to inform the ANF Steering Committee member response to the four documents. Following this process the next round of consultations will be with the wider profession.

> Codes of Ethics and Codes of Professional Conduct

The Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia and the Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct for Midwives in Australia will be launched in August by the Minister of Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP. Speakers at the event will include the new Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, Rosemary Bryant.

> Primary Health Care

In June the ANF assisted in organising a round table on the role of nurses in primary health care, which was attended by the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP and peak nursing and medical organisations. The meeting was to inform the debate around the reform of health provision and funding of primary health care. There was particular focus on improving consumer access to the safe and effective care that nurses already provide.

A consensus statement was developed in the lead up to the roundtable which provided background to discussions on the day. Participant organisations expressed a willingness to further explore the role of nursing in primary health care and to continue the discourse. The participants from the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission indicated their interest in an ongoing dialogue with the group to advance the primary health care reform agenda. Further information is available at www.anf.org.au.

The Federal Office has met with the Rural Doctors Association of Australia and the Primary Health Branch of the Department of Health and Ageing to further inform the discussions on nursing roles in the delivery of primary health care.

> E-health

Nursing Informatics Australia (NIA) made a request through the Federal Office that Branches become involved in an online international survey about nursing informatics. This project is being undertaken as part of an international collaboration with the HIMSS Nursing Informatics Taskforce



(USA). The project is looking at the 'Impact of Health Information Technology (HIT) on the Role of Nurses and Interdisciplinary Communication in Acute Care Settings'. NIA are undertaking the Australian component of the international research which is also involving countries such as USA, Canada, UK, NZ, Germany and Finland. As nurses have traditionally functioned as 'information repositories' nursing workflow is an important

place to explore how and where HIT tools could impact interdisciplinary communication, practice efficiency and effectiveness, relationships and workflow in acute care settings. The survey is voluntary, de-identified and available online. Participating Branches have emailed members a letter of introduction and link to the survey. It is anticipated that NIA will share the results of the survey with the ANF by mid 2009.



GED KEARNEY
Federal Secretary

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "ged".



LEE THOMAS
Assistant Federal Secretary

A handwritten signature in cursive script 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).