



> Review of temporary skilled migration programs

As a member of the federal government's Skilled Migration Consultative Panel, ANF continues to meet with government and peak employer bodies to confer on a range of matters dealing with the conditions that are to apply to temporary skilled migration programmes. In April 2009, the federal government announced a series of changes to the 457 visa programme, in part to reduce the levels of exploitation of migrant workers but also to boost the training and employment of local workers. These changes were broadly reflected in the Skilled Migration Worker Protection Act 2008 as well as changes to the migration regulations.

The Skilled Migration Consultative Panel is currently looking at a number of key issues including establishing market salary rates for 457 workers as well as the severance arrangements to apply to 457 workers in circumstances where their employment ceases as a result of redundancy.

The concept of market salary rates has led to a fundamental disagreement between unions and employer representatives with the unions arguing that the market rate should be determined by the examination of the relevant collective agreement or the rate normally paid in relevant industry or sector, whereas the employers argue that the market should be the award or agreement enterprise rate whichever applies to the domestic workforce.

These discussions are ongoing and the panel is to next meet in Melbourne on 21 May 2009. It is interesting to note that since January 2009, 457 applications have fallen by 40% reflecting the impact of the economic downturn on employment generally.

> ACTU Industrial Officers Conference

On 22 and 23 April 2009, the ACTU convened a national biennial meeting of industrial officers in Melbourne. The meeting considered and discussed a range of matters in the Fair Work Act 2008 and consequential legislation. The conference consisting of plenary sessions and workshops debated and discussed how unions could work more effectively in the new environment. The meeting was well attended with over 20 representatives from ANF Federal Office and Branches.

> The Transitional and Consequential Amendment Bill 2009

The Fair Work (Transitional Provision and Consequential Amendments) Bill 2009 has now been introduced into the Parliament and is subject to consideration by a Senate Committee. The Bill will deal with a number of transitional issues including:

- how old institutions (what the AIRC) will be phased out;
- how award and agreements under WRA will operate in the new system;
- how existing enterprise agreements will be treated as a new system; and
- the role of state registered unions in the national system.

It is expected that the Senate Committee will report on the Bill to the Parliament by 7 May 2009 and the government expects that the Bill will be enacted and operational by May 2009.

#### > Award Modernisation

The Australian Industrial Relations Commission handed down its final decision on the new modern awards in the Health and Welfare Services sector on the 3 April 2009 confirming an earlier recommendation to maintain an occupational award for nurses. The new award (Nurses Award 2010) comes into effect on the 1 January 2010 and covers nurses working in all healthcare settings except, (at this stage), nurses employed in primary and secondary schools. The decision reinforces the key principle of nurses' remuneration being based on skill and educational qualifications rather than their employment or practice setting and importantly, maintains the occupational identity of nurses in the system. The decision also includes the making of three other modern awards: Aged Care Industry Award 2010; Health Professionals and Support Services Award 2010 and the Medical Practitioners Award 2010.

#### > National Registration and Accreditation Scheme – industrial issues

The ANF met with the project team representatives appointed to manage the transitional arrangements for staff moving from the State/Territory based Boards to the new national structure. A number of questions remain in relation to legal status of the new structure and the implications for transferring and non-transferring employees. The project team has undertaken to provide further information in a revised staffing strategy document for distribution to all staff. A further meeting is expected to take place this month to begin the process of negotiating a collective agreement to cover employees of the new body.

#### > ACTU

The ACTU executive met on 5 May. The main order of business was ACTU congress. Several policies have been reviewed including the health policy and will go to Congress for endorsement. The ANF had significant input into the health policy. The ANF nationally has 84 votes at congress and these are shared on a per capita basis with all the Branches except for NSWNA who affiliate in their own right. The congress is scheduled for June.

#### > Federal Budget

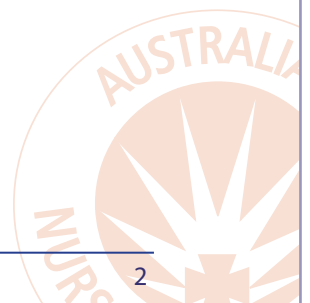
The Federal Office met with the Prime Minister's office for a pre-budget discussion last week. Paid maternity leave, PBS and MBS reform and aged care reform along the lines of our campaign are the key items for us this year. We have had regular meetings with the Health Minister, and the Minister for Ageing as well as several other key members of Parliament. The Federal Office will attend the budget lock up on 12 May and a full report will be given next month.

#### > Aged Care Campaign

The campaign has gathered momentum. The Federal Office role over the last few weeks has been to gain stakeholder support at a national level and to continue to lobby the federal government for our key reforms. We have met with stakeholders who include the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission, Catholic Health Australia, Baptist Care, Australian Medical Association, Aged and Community Services Australia and Aged Care Association Australia (ACAA). There is general support for our objectives. The federal secretary has been asked to speak to the board of ACAA, the peak body of for profit providers.

#### > Primary Health Care in Australia – A nursing and midwifery consensus view

The project to develop an evidence-based consensus view of nursing and midwifery in primary health care in Australia, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) and managed by the ANF, was completed in April 2009. A significant number of national nursing organisations have supported this primary health care consensus view. Many nurses and midwives gave generously of their time over the very short timeframe of this project to review the successive drafts and contribute their stories to this paper. Once the graphic design of the publication is finalised it will be available electronically, before the end of May, through a number of the peak national nursing organisations' websites.



> Informatics Competency Standards Project

The ANF is conducting an Australian Government funded national project in conjunction with Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to develop, validate and publish Informatics Competency Standards for the nursing profession in Australia. The on-line survey for the project conducted in March 2009 received in excess of 5,300 responses. Recruitment is now underway for telephone focus groups to discuss participant's 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. If you are interested in participating in one of these telephone focus group interviews, please visit the home page for the list of available dates and times and register your interest by emailing the ANF at [itproject@anf.org.au](mailto:itproject@anf.org.au).

> Joint ANF/RCNA Influenza Pandemic Working Group

The Joint ANF/RCNA Influenza Pandemic Working Group is finalising development of a guideline to inform members and other nurses about their role in the preparation for and management of an influenza pandemic in Australia. The guideline includes reference to some useful resources for the reader seeking further information on influenza pandemic issues in general and the specific current global situation with swine flu. As the largest single component of the health workforce, nurses are likely to play a major role in the event of an influenza pandemic in this country. It is anticipated that this document will be ready for release by mid May 2009.



GED KEARNEY  
Federal Secretary



LEE THOMAS  
Assistant Federal Secretary

> Review of the existing supply arrangements of PBS Medicines in Residential Aged Care Facilities and Private Hospitals.

The ANF was represented at a workshop in Melbourne in April which considered issues relating to the existing supply arrangements of PBS Medicines in Residential Aged Care Facilities. The review process commenced in mid 2008 and has to date included:

- review of literature and other relevant documentation;
- extensive consultation with stakeholders;
- preparation of a Discussion Paper and associated public Call for Submissions (the ANF submission can be found on [www.anf.org.au](http://www.anf.org.au)), and
- analysis of the submissions received.

Workshop participants were presented with options for supply arrangements which have arisen from the consultation process. Of prime concern to health professionals from across the pharmacy, nursing and medical professions is that the arrangements for supply of PBS medicines: reduce duplication of tasks, streamline processes so that aged care residents receive their medicines in a timely manner, and, allow for the development of electronic prescribing and information transfer systems. Recommendations from the review will be presented to the Department of Health and Ageing later this year.

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).

