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joint position statement

Indigenous Australian people and nursing education

This position statement has been prepared jointly by the Australian Nursing Federation and Royal College of Nursing, Australia.

The Australian Nursing Federation and Royal College of Nursing, Australia support the position of the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses that: *there is a need to educate non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved in health care at all levels of the nature and effects of past and present government policies of colonisation, assimilation, forced removal of peoples from their traditional lands and forced removal of children from their families.... To provide health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples it is necessary for providers of that health care to understand the link between historical factors and the appalling health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*¹

It is the position of the Australian Nursing Federation and Royal College of Nursing, Australia that:

1. The recommendations of the Report of the Indigenous Australian Nursing Education Working Group 2002 are endorsed including:
 - 1.1 Indigenous Australian children, regardless of their geographical location, have access to the range of educational opportunities available to other Australians that is, at least 12 years of quality education starting with pre-school and including vocational and higher education;
 - 1.2 identified strategies which improve school retention rates for Indigenous Australian children need to be implemented and supported with funding and other resources;
 - 1.3 health departments, universities and registered training organisations should work together to develop culturally sensitive promotional material on nursing to distribute to Indigenous Australian communities;
 - 1.4 content which specifically encourages Indigenous Australian men to consider nursing should be included in these materials;
 - 1.5 recruitment and retention strategies are implemented to increase the number of Indigenous Australian nurses (both registered and enrolled²) to at least equivalent to the proportion of Indigenous Australian people within the Australian population;
 - 1.6 each university and registered training organisation allocates specific places for Indigenous Australian students in nursing and fill these places annually;

¹ <http://www.indiginet.com.au/catsin/>

² Registered nurse (Division 1) and registered nurse (Division 2) in Victoria

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- 1.7 each university and registered training organisation implements appropriate strategies to recruit Indigenous Australian students of nursing, for example by providing information sessions for primary and secondary school students and/or residential experience programs to introduce Indigenous Australian people to university life;
- 1.8 universities and registered training organisations employ an Indigenous Australian liaison nurse to communicate with and promote nursing to potential Indigenous Australian students;
- 1.9 universities continue to use the services of Indigenous Student Support Centres to help recruit Indigenous Australian students for nursing courses;
- 1.10 there is the provision of streamlined application and enrolment procedures for Indigenous Australian students;
- 1.11 there is an improvement in the availability and accuracy of timely data on enrolments and course completions of Indigenous Australian students of nursing, and on the number of Indigenous Australian nurses employed in the health sector;
- 1.12 Indigenous Australian students of nursing and nurses are encouraged to declare their Indigenous status;
- 1.13 there is an increase in the number of non-bonded scholarships for Indigenous Australian students;
- 1.14 travel allowances for Indigenous Australian students in nursing who are non-recipients of ABSTUDY are re-introduced to attend clinical practice placements;
- 1.15 the Australian Government provide Higher Education Contribution Scheme scholarships to Indigenous Australian students of nursing who are not recipients of other scholarships;
- 1.16 targeted Australian Government scholarships are available so that Indigenous Australian registered nurses can undertake higher degrees;
- 1.17 university Indigenous student support centres collaborate with schools of nursing to identify personnel with appropriate skill and knowledge to mentor or tutor Indigenous Australian students of nursing;
- 1.18 structures and mechanisms that build partnerships which enable Indigenous Australian communities to participate as advisors, mentors and community support persons to schools of nursing are developed at local and regional levels;
- 1.19 academics and other teaching staff are educated to ensure they are aware of the cultural and family issues which may impact on the progression of Indigenous Australian students of nursing through their courses;
- 1.20 Universities and registered training organisations facilitate the availability of culturally safe housing, for Indigenous Australian students relocating from Indigenous Australian communities to take up places in nursing courses;
- 1.21 Indigenous Australian students of nursing are provided with access to culturally appropriate, safe counselling services with confidential referral systems in place;

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- 1.22 the appointment of clinical mentors for Indigenous Australian students is facilitated by collaboration between universities, schools of nursing and the health sector;
- 1.23 compulsory subjects (however titled) on Indigenous Australian culture, history and health are included in all nursing undergraduate curricula and in the coursework of post-graduate nursing curricula;
- 1.24 Indigenous Australians are involved in the development of guidelines for Indigenous curricula content to disseminate to the universities and registered training organisations that can be adopted to suit local conditions and Indigenous Australians should also be involved in teaching these subjects;
- 1.25 schools of nursing should facilitate clinical experiences in Indigenous Australian communities where relevant and appropriate;
- 1.26 schools of nursing and registered training organisations should develop culturally appropriate post-graduate and continuing education programs in consultation with Indigenous Australian organisations;
- 1.27 schools of nursing should develop specific post-graduate courses to meet the needs of nurses rural and remote area nurses, including nurse practitioners, who care for Indigenous Australian communities; and
- 1.28 articulation pathways are developed by providers of Aboriginal health worker and Torres Strait Islander health worker courses and universities to enable and encourage Aboriginal health workers and Torres Strait Islander health workers and Indigenous Australian enrolled nurses to become registered nurses.