



NURSING AND MIDWIFERY BOARD OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2007

Members of the Board

Ms Angela Brannelly	Chair
Mr Steven Cooper	Practitioner Member
Mr Phillip Harnas	Practitioner Member
Ms Cec Farley	Practitioner Member (midwife)
Ms Frances Pagdin	Practitioner Member
Ms Heather Sjoberg	Public Member
Ms Kim Ball	Public Member

Board support

Ms Jill Huck	Registrar
Ms Cate Lynch	Policy & Research
Ms Sally Ozolins	Complaints Manager
Ms Julie Burrows	Registrations Manager

Message from the Registrar

Welcome to the first newsletter from the Nursing and Midwifery Board for 2007. This year has been a busy one for the Board, particularly in relation to a series of consultations on national registration of nurses and midwives and national accreditation of education programs. Further information about this is included in the newsletter. For the remainder of the year, significant work lies ahead, especially in relation to accreditation of several Northern Territory nursing programs.

In February, four Board positions were advertised, with the Minister appointing the new members in June. I would like to thank the retiring members of the Board, Sharon Sykes and Barry Fernley, for their valuable contribution and in particular, recognise Sharon's leadership during her term as Chair.

Steven Cooper and Angela Brannelly have been reappointed and two new members, Frances Pagdin and Kim Ball have been appointed to the Board.

Frances Pagdin is the Nursing Director Mental Health for the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services. Her qualifications include a Master of Education Administration and her extensive experience in nursing education includes nursing program development.

Kim Ball is employed as a senior solicitor at Clayton Utz and has broad legal experience

including medical negligence, in which she maintains an interest.

Board Website

Previous newsletters have indicated that a Board website was under development.

The website is now "live" and available at the following address:

<http://www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards>

All Registration Boards are accessed through this common pathway. Once you are at the Health Professions Licensing Authority homepage, click on the link to *Nursing and Midwifery Board* to go to the website.

The site provides access to the following:

- Applications for registration;
- Applications for renewal of registration;
- Policies and Guidelines;
- *Health Practitioners Act 2004*;
- Board contact details; and
- The register of nurses and midwives (at a given date).

As new policies are developed or existing policies are updated they are posted to the Board's website. The newsletter is also available on the website.

Board Accreditation Activity

Graduate Diploma of Midwifery

In October 2006, the Board accredited a new Graduate Diploma of Midwifery program offered by Charles Darwin University (CDU).

CDU Enrolled Nurse Program

In October of last year the Board extended the accreditation for the current Certificate IV (Nursing) program until December 2007 pending finalisation of the National Health Training Package. The finalised package provides two educational pathways for Enrolled Nurses: Certificate IV and Diploma. CDU will apply for reaccreditation of the current Certificate IV program for 2008. It is not known at the time of preparing this newsletter if CDU plans to offer both Certificate IV and Diploma pathways.



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Some other jurisdictional Boards have amended their entitlement to enrolment policies so that ENs must now complete a Diploma qualification to be entitled to enrol.

Nurse Practitioner Program

Flinders University in collaboration with the Centre for Remote Health have applied to the Board for accreditation of a Master of Remote Health Practice (Nurse Practitioner) program. The Board is currently assessing the application.

Board Policies

This year the Board has revised the following policies:

- Entitlement to registration;
- English language competence;
- Enrolled Nurses and medication administration;
- Position statement on the role of the registered nurse in the provision of midwifery care;
- Position Statement nurses and midwives infected with blood-borne viruses.

The Board continues to develop and review a range of policies to guide professional practice. All policies are available on the Board's website.

National Registration and Accreditation Scheme

At a meeting on 13 April 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) announced that it had agreed on the arrangements for a new national system for registration of health professionals and the accreditation of the training and education programs for implementation by July 2008.

A communiqué was issued by COAG, which included the following statement:

The new scheme will deliver many benefits to the Australian community including health consumers. National standards in each profession will mean stronger safety guarantees for the community. Patients will know that wherever the health professional is from, they

are registered against the same, high-quality national professional standards.

COAG agreed that the new scheme should support workforce responsiveness, flexibility, sustainability and innovation. National registration will also mean that doctors, nurses and other health professionals will be able to practice across State and Territory borders without having to re-register. This will improve workforce mobility, allowing health practitioners to move easily to a new state or territory to serve in times of emergency or provide locum services.

The new system will initially cover nine health professions: medical practitioners, nurses and midwives, pharmacists, physiotherapists, psychologists, osteopaths, chiropractors, optometrists and dentists (including dental hygienists, dental prosthetists and dental therapists).

Key features of the new arrangements include a continuing role for Health Ministers, a single, consolidated scheme and a new national professional board for each of the nine professions. Each profession will develop standards for its profession for approval by Health Ministers. Individual registration and accreditation decisions will remain the responsibility of the professions. Community representatives will play a key role in the new scheme. Health Ministers will be assisted by an independent Advisory Council which will provide policy advice to Ministers. COAG agreed to consider further the membership of the Advisory Council.

Prior to the announcement, COAG consulted with stakeholders and consumers on the development of the new national system through a joint Commonwealth and State/Territory Group called the Health Working Group. The Board actively contributed to the consultation process at both a territory and national level and provided feedback on the proposed national registration and accreditation schemes by working collaboratively with both the NT Board Chairs Forum (comprising the Chairs of the 11 health practitioner Boards) and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) on three written submissions to the Health Working Group.

In a media release dated 16 April 2007 the ANMC Chairperson, Ms Anne Morrison stated: *The ANMC which is comprised of the eight state and territory nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities, supports the implementation of national regulation of the nursing and midwifery professions. However, this support is on the basis that the new scheme delivers clear improvements on the current regulatory arrangements and the scheme can be achieved through a model which is cost neutral to the community, nurses and midwives. We look forward to continuing to work with all levels of government on this initiative as more detail is made available. The ANMC is committed to supporting a scheme that will achieve best practice in regulation of nurses and midwives in the interests of the community.*

Next steps in the process include setting out the agreed key parameters for a new national system for registration of health professionals and the accreditation of the training and education programs in an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). At the time of this newsletter going to print, the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers had yet to sign off on the IGA. Once this occurs, the Health Ministers will take the lead in progressing the required implementation and transitional arrangements in consultation with the professions for the scheme to commence on July 2008.



ANMC Assessment Standards for Migration

The ANMC assesses nursing and midwifery qualifications for the purpose of migration and is the assessing authority for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). The standards and criteria used for assessment have been developed in conjunction with the eight Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authorities. Recently, the ANMC Registration Standards Committee (RSC) was tasked with reviewing these standards and criteria. The updated standards are now available on the ANMC website.

Development of National Standards for the Assessment of Internationally Qualified Nurses and Midwives for Registration and Migration

The Board has approved the RSC project for the Development of National Standards for the Assessment of Internationally Qualified Nurses and Midwives for Registration and Migration. The aim of the project is to research and formulate *uniform national standards* for the assessment of internationally qualified nurses and midwives who apply for registration and/or migration to Australia. It is anticipated that the project will be finalised in time for the proposed implementation of national registration and accreditation in July 2008.

Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Nurses and Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Midwives in Australia

Ms Amanda Adrian has been engaged by the ANMC as the consultant for Phase Two of the Codes Project. Ms Adrian will take the rest of this year to harmonise the suite of documents and develop exemplars to assist nurses and midwives in their practice. Two focus groups are to be held in August in Sydney and Melbourne where the exemplars will be developed and remaining issues resolved.

ANMC National Guidelines on Professional Boundaries Project

This project is well under way with forums completed around Australia to provide input from nurses and midwives to the draft documents. Consumer forums have also been held in Newcastle, Canberra and Hobart. Practitioner and consumer forums for New Zealand are planned for later this year. An extensive literature review is underway and the final draft document will be available for comment and feedback from nurses and midwives during November and December.

Review of ANMC Position Statements and Guidelines

A full-scale review of ANMC Position Statements and Guidelines continues. Those with ongoing relevance are in the process of being reviewed and updated, to ensure ANMC continues to present a solid, current, body of policy documents with a clear regulatory focus.

Close to completion

- The *ANMC Guidelines for Nurses and Midwives on Telehealth Practice* is being presented to Council for endorsement in August 2007.

Under consultation

A number of new or revised policy documents are currently the subject of a consultation process with the Nursing and Midwifery Boards and key stakeholders. They include:

- *ANMC Guidelines on the Orientation of overseas nurses and midwives into the Australian healthcare context*; and
- *ANMC Position Statement: Ethical Recruitment of overseas nurses and midwives (revised)*.

In development

A number of new or revised policy documents are in development, drafts of which will be sent for wider consultation later this year. They include:

- *Principles for dealing with Professional Conduct Issues*
- *Guidelines on Delegation and Supervision for nurses and midwives*.

National Framework for Decision Making by Nurses and Midwives about Scopes of Practice (National DMF)

The framework was signed off by Council in late May. This followed several months of additional work to ensure that the framework reflected the feedback received from the consultation process with the nursing and midwifery professions. The framework can be viewed on the ANMC website.

This project has demonstrated the importance of listening to the views and wishes of nurses and

midwives nationally. Whilst the project ended up being longer than anticipated, the ANMC is now confident that it will provide the professions with a valuable process for decision making around scopes of practice.

It is anticipated that the implementation of the National DMF will be progressively undertaken in each jurisdiction as existing documents come up for review.

Development of a National Framework for the Accreditation of Nursing and Midwifery Courses leading to registration, enrolment, endorsement and authorisation in Australia

Following the successful completion of this project in February 2007, some Nursing and Midwifery Boards identified the need to revise their existing standards to meet the new principles. It was therefore proposed that in order to be prepared for the introduction of national accreditation in July 2008, that the ANMC could develop national standards and criteria to replace existing jurisdictional standards. In May 2007, Council supported the proposal to incorporate a further phase (Phase 3) of the Accreditation project to develop the national standards to coincide with the national changes in accreditation in mid 2008.

The next phase of the project will include the contracting of a consultant who will be responsible for:

- the production of a literature review of the standards for accreditation used by nursing, midwifery and other key professions.
- a set of national standards for accreditation
- a national implementation plan
- an evaluation strategy.

It is anticipated that this work will be completed by May 2008.

PUBLICATIONS

Hard copies of ANMC publications have almost sold out. Please check the ANMC website for information about availability. Most publications can also be downloaded free of charge for individual use, from the ANMC website www.anmc.org.au. Multiple copies may be subject to copyright restrictions. Please check with the ANMC Business Manager for more information.

Know your Act

The Board urges all nurses and midwives to familiarise themselves and understand the legislation that regulates their practise. Each edition of the Newsletter contains extracts from the Act with an explanation to assist this understanding.

Section 117 Employer notice of misconduct or incompetence

If a person who employs a health practitioner terminates or suspends the health practitioner's employment because of alleged or actual misconduct or incompetence to practise, the person **must** provide a written report of the circumstances of the termination or suspension to the relevant Board and to the health practitioner.

The Board is concerned that employers may not be aware of this provision. An employer of a nurse or midwife is obliged to notify the Board if the practitioner's employment is terminated or suspended because of alleged or actual misconduct or incompetence.

Section 114 Employer notice relating to fitness to practise

If a person who employs a health practitioner considers that the health practitioner has a mental or physical incapacity that has resulted in or is likely to result in an incapacity that seriously impairs or may seriously impair the health practitioner's ability to practice, he or she **may** notify the relevant Board of that fact.

Section 112 Health practitioner notice relating to fitness to practise.

If, as a result of his or her treating another health practitioner in relation to an illness or condition, a health practitioner considers that the other health practitioner has a mental or physical incapacity that has resulted in or is likely to result in an incapacity that seriously impairs or may seriously impair his or her ability to practice in the category of health care for which the health practitioner is registered or enrolled, the first-mentioned health practitioner **must** give the Board that registered or enrolled the other health practitioner notice of that fact.

A number of nurses have notified the various health professional boards in the Northern Territory about the possible impairment of registered nurses, enrolled nurses and other registered health professionals. A person who has concerns about the health of a registered practitioner is not required to conduct an investigation before notifying the Board, only to state the facts that led to the concern. A person who makes a notification in good faith is protected from liability in making the notification. It is the role of the Board to investigate the practitioner's fitness to practise.

Registration Statistics

As at 31 July 2007 the following number of nurses and midwives were registered or enrolled to practise in the Northern Territory:

- 556 enrolled nurses
- 8 registered midwives
- 3427 registered
- 997 nurses authorised to practise as a midwife.

Complaints and notifications

Professional conduct

At 31 July 2007 there were 13 matters of professional conduct before the Board, dealt with under Part 4 of the *Health Practitioners Act 2004*. One further matter has been referred to the Health Professional Review Tribunal.

Impairment

Eight (8) nurses are being monitored by the Board in relation to a health condition and one (1) nurse was under investigation for possible impairment under Part 5 of the Act.

Performance Assessment

One nurse is currently being investigated for possible unsatisfactory professional performance under Part 6 of the Act.

Changed Your Name Or Address Recently?

Section 46 of the Act states that a practitioner, must, within 30 days of changing his or her name, personal or business address, forward this information to the Board.



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This is important because if the Board does not have the current address, the nurse or midwife:

- will not receive the application to renew annual registration/enrolment;
- newsletters will not be received;
- letters from the Board about matters relating to practise will not be received
- nurses and midwives involved in professional conduct matters or identified as witnesses in professional conduct matters will not be able to be located.

Contact details

Nursing and Midwifery Board of the Northern Territory
GPO Box 4221
DARWIN NT 0801

Telephone +61 8 8999 4157

Fax +61 8 8999 4196

Email healthprofessions.ths@nt.gov.au

Nurses and Midwives E-Cohort to study workforce and health outcomes

Nurses and midwives make up approximately 50% of the entire Australian health care workforce and are critical to the health and welfare of all Australians. Unfortunately, there is currently a critical shortage of qualified nurses and midwives in Australia and we need to better understand how to recruit and retain nurses and midwives so that we can have a viable nursing and midwifery workforce.

The Australian Research Council, with industry partners, has funded an online population-based study of nurses and midwives within Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Called the Nurses and Midwives E-Cohort, the purpose of the study is to examine factors associated with both workforce and health outcomes by electronic data collection.

This longitudinal research project has been established to describe and quantify factors associated with recruitment and retention in the workforce and subsequent patterns of employment. The study will provide important information to inform education and workforce policy for the nursing and midwifery professions.

All nurses and midwives in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom are being invited to participate in the study, as well as all undergraduate university pre-registration nursing students from Queensland and South Australia.

To register online to become a participant in the study, nurses and midwives need their current Nursing and Midwifery Board registration number (nurse ID), their date of birth and a current email address.

For more information, or to register, please go to the website www.e-cohort.net