



Yvonne Falckh  
NT Branch Secretary

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## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

The Northern Territory Public Sector Nurses (NTPS) have been going through a protracted process of bargaining a new collective agreement. This process has been going on since May 2006. The agreement was put to a vote of all NTPS nurses by the Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment (OCPE), and resoundly rejected, resulting in the ANF NT taking things to the next step - a secret ballot for protected industrial action. Current inflation in the NT is 5% and the OCPE offer is 3%, which is a 2% pay cut. Recruiting and retaining nurses is of major concern to the ANF NT, especially when we are competing nationally for scarce resources, nurses.

Appropriately staffed workplaces and available hospital beds have generated intense media over the previous months. Nurses in the NT are familiar with working in excess of 60 hours per week with some nurses working up to 90 hours. This is due to work places being understaffed and the Department of Health and Community Services (DH&CS) content with staffing workplaces based on overtime. Many work units are in excess of 100 shifts short when a roster is developed, leaving the shortfall to be picked up by staff already allocated their 152 hours per roster. This is not an acceptable way to run a health service. It is time the DH&CS bureaucrats recognised the dangers associated with such practices. Patients lives are being put at risk whilst nurses are being stretched beyond their limits.

It was pleasing to hear our new CEO of Health publicly state that he would address the massive amounts of overtime being worked by NT nurses. Unfortunately his statement 'that once a nurse has worked 60 hours in a week the nurse should seek consent of the Nursing Director to work any further extra hours' is of major concern for the ANF NT. What ever happened to a 38 hour week and where is it considered acceptable that a nurse should be expected to work 60 hours per week?

Discussions in the NT Parliament resulted in Nursing Directors being blamed for allowing nurses to work the large amounts of overtime. Nurses are working the overtime because there is not enough nurses employed by the DH&CS to meet the demands in the NT Health system. To blame the Nursing Directors is not acceptable when the state of the health service in the NT lies squarely on the shoulders of the Minister and the CEO of Health.

## news briefs

### NTPS Nurses 2006-2008 Certified Agreement

NT Public Sector Nurses have won the right to take Protected Industrial action after an overwhelming response to a Secret Ballot conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission. The secret ballot for protected industrial action closed on 12th March 2007 and was counted later that day. ANF NT, have taken this major step of Protected Industrial Action on behalf of NT Public Sector Nurses, due to the lack of a satisfactory progression in negotiations with the employer, The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, (OCPE).

Nurses voted in favour for protected Industrial action by the following percentages:

- Stop work meetings- 94%;
- Wearing of T-shirts and badges- 95%;
- Refusal to perform non nursing duties - 97%, and
- A ban on overtime - 87%

Thank you to everyone that responded. We look forward to advancing our negotiations with the OCPE and the DH&CS. The door is open for the Government to seriously address shortfalls in their offer to NTPS Nurses. The Government needs to listen to their NTPS Nurses, especially when it comes to safe staffing levels and patient safety.

### Branch President Shirel Nomoa

I would like to give you some information about who I am, for those nurses that don't know me. I have nursed in the NT for 34 years and have been a workplace delegate for approximately 25 years and an ANF NT Branch Councilor/ Executive for 20 years. I have had the opportunity to participate on all the Public Sector EBA negotiations to date. These current negotiations have been the most challenging.

I am committed to representing my fellow nurses and being a voice fighting to ensure your rights and conditions at work are protected. I am an advocate for the issues that are important to the membership.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing President Mr Neil Spencer and the outgoing Executive and Branch Councilors and I would like to acknowledge their hard work and use of their valuable time to attend to the duties of the ANF NT. I look forward to working with our Branch Secretary, Yvonne Falckh and the new Branch Council.

The ANF NT has challenging times ahead, attempts to fragment our conditions with AWA's or sub standard agreements, and threats to your rights at work. The Howard Government's WorkChoices legislation is threatening the gains in pay and conditions ANF NT Branch members have worked so hard for over the last 20 years. Chronically unsafe staffing levels and exorbitant amounts of overtime to name a few major issues threaten our everyday practice. We (the ANF NT Members) must stand united, and all speak with one voice - only together can we overcome these attacks on our conditions.

It's important to remember that **YOU** are the **ANF**. Get to know your workplace Delegates and check out the ANF NT website. If you have a colleague who is not a member encourage them to join, as there is **strength in numbers**. Be aware of what is happening in your Unions, be prepared to protect your professional conditions, be active. Together we can achieve great things, divided we achieve nothing.

### Job Delegate Conference 2-3 May 2007

The conference will be held 2nd and 3rd May. Some excellent speakers will be doing presentations on the theme of professional issues and Industrial Relations. The conference dinner will be a sunset harbour cruise on board the Tumlaren on the Wednesday night.

There is still time for resolutions to be sent to the Branch for inclusion at the Conference.

### Webpage

The ANF NT Branch webpage ([www.ntanf.org.au](http://www.ntanf.org.au)) now has links to current negotiations. For updates on negotiations, ensure that you check regularly.

The website also has the *Membership Application form* which may be downloaded for those non members that wish to join the ANF NT. *Method of Payments forms* and *Review of Membership details forms* are also available for downloading.

## from the branch office



### Organiser's Desk

Matthew Gardiner - [matthew.ntanf@octa4.net.au](mailto:matthew.ntanf@octa4.net.au)

By the time you read that this report the ballot for Northern Territory Public Sector Nurses industrial action in accordance with the restrictive "Worst Choices" legislation will have occurred and we will either be celebrating our win, for a decent wage increase and addressing the issues around recruitment and retention, or commiserating the tight-fisted Territory Government and planning for the next Collective agreement.

One thing that we should not forget at this time is the only reason that the NT Government can treat nurses with such disrespect is due to the "Worst Choices" legislation. Later this year there will be a Federal Election, the only way that we can change these restrictive Industrial Laws is to get rid of the Howard Government. We will never be able to compete with India and China when it comes to cheap wages and low conditions.

Far be it for me to tell you how to vote, but the only way that we can change the IR system to be fairer and more just is to vote for anyone who does not blindly support this unfair system, for it's not just you who will be forced to compete in this "Brave New World" of IR but your kids.

We have all seen what a theoretically good employer will do to keep wages down. Can you imagine how your kids will go negotiating their first AWA with an unscrupulous employer? If the "Worst Choices" legislation is allowed to continue, we will be the first generation of workers who will pass on worse conditions to those who follow us.

If you are interested in doing something in the "Your Rights At Work" campaign, you can contact Rebecca Want, ACTU Community Coordinator (Solomon), Mob: 0416 086 585, Email: [rwant@actu.asn.au](mailto:rwant@actu.asn.au)

And check out the websites: [www.actu.asn.au](http://www.actu.asn.au) and [www.yourrightsatwork.com.au](http://www.yourrightsatwork.com.au)

Collective Agreements	Current Situation
Juninga	Nurses have been included in the Frontier Services draft agreement.
Frontier Services EBA	Draft agreement has been developed.
Danila Dilba	Staff have rejected the NON Union agreement.
Katherine West Health Board	Nurses are commencing to negotiate a new agreement.
Australian Red Cross Blood Service (NT)	Draft agreement has been developed.
Darwin Private Hospital	Agreement reached. Private sector nurses wages will be more than competitive compared to their Public Sector colleagues.
NT Public Sector Nurses	A secret ballot for the purpose of commencing protected industrial action closed on the 12 March. Thank you to everyone that responded.

### Darwin Private Hospital

Staff have voted to accept the union collective agreement. Offer gives immediate 8.34% wage increase and a guarantee to maintain increases in line with Public Sector increases. Leave loading has increased from 14.5% to 17.5% for all accrued annual leave.

A Certificate Allowance equal to 5% of base salary of the individual nurse will be paid to nurses who hold post-graduate certificates or post-graduate diplomas from recognised tertiary institutions or hospitals.

Enrolled Nurses who hold and maintain medication administration endorsement, who have completed approved courses and who, through the normal course of their duties utilise this qualification, will be paid a skills allowance. This will be 5% of their base salary calculated at ordinary time rate, calculated on the hours worked each pay period.

This is a good agreement for the Private Sector Nurses.

## news briefs

Dates To Remember Site	Date	Visiting Official
<b>Alice Springs</b>		
March - Roadshow	27th and 28th March	Branch Secretary and Organiser
April	26th and 27th April	Organiser
May (Date Change)	23rd May	TBC
<b>Tennant Creek</b>		
March - Roadshow	26th and 27th March	Branch Secretary and Organiser
<b>Katherine</b>		
April - Roadshow	11th and 12th April	Branch Secretary and Organiser, Members Equity
<b>Gove</b>		
May	31st May	TBC
<b>Job Delegate Conference</b>	2nd and 3rd May - Palm City Resort	

### From the Membership Officer

Jane Wilde - [ntanf@octa4.net.au](mailto:ntanf@octa4.net.au)

Membership Forms are available on the website. Please let us know about any changes to your address, workplace or bank details.

Don't forget, all members can recruit new members into the ANF by just printing off the application form from the website, filling it out and either posting or faxing it to us.

If for any reason you have become unfinancial, please contact the office between the hours of 0830 and 1230, and we will arrange the easiest way to bring your membership up to date.

### Important Information - Changes to the Electoral Act

As of the 14th of April 2007, dramatic changes will occur to the way you enroll to vote.

Previously you could enroll to vote up to a week after an election was called, but changes implemented by the Federal Government mean that the voting rolls will close at 8pm on the day of the announcement of an election.

So if you are not enrolled correctly before an election is announced, you cannot have your say.

The changes also mean you need to have a Driver's License or other proscribed document (like a passport) as proof of identity, alternatively you need two people who are not related to you, who have known you for more than a month, and who can prove their identity with a license or other proscribed identity document (like a passport) to vouch for you.

This means that if you have moved recently or you have children who will soon turn 18 you must get in contact with the Australian Electoral Commission to ensure that you are all correctly enrolled to vote.

Make sure you are enrolled so you can have your say in this year's Federal Election! This is the only way you can have your say about "Worst Choices" otherwise you will not be heard.

Contact your local Australian Electoral Commission office or visit [www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au)



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