



Yvonne Falckh
NT Branch Secretary

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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

A report released in early July *The State of our Public Hospitals, June 2006 Report* compiled by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing identified that Northern Territory hospitals are the busiest hospitals in Australia. The number of public hospital admissions in the Northern Territory per 1,000 weighted population is steadily increasing. In 2004-2005 more than 104,700 people had presented to emergency departments throughout the Northern Territory. So if you feel you are working harder than you have ever worked before, you are probably right.

Safe workloads and the ability to practice within a safe environment is the right of every nurse, yet Northern Territory health executives continue to make unreasonable demands on nurse managers. This is a major issue with NTPS nurses. The current Collective Agreement Bargaining process for NTPS nurses has identified the urgent need to get the staffing and workload issues correct to improve our workloads. Correct numbers of appropriately skilled nurses in the workplace would ensure reductions in overtime, sick leave, agency staff use and workers compensation claims resulting from staff exhaustion and high levels of workplace stress. Get the workload issues right and everyone wins.

A major issue resulting in many calls to the ANF NT Branch relates to the number of patients on trolleys in Emergency Departments (parked in waiting rooms and corridors) in the NT. Nurses are being pushed to the limit and are concerned about the safety and well-being of their patients and colleagues. It is time the Emergency Departments were able to function as Emergency Departments and not unfunded wards for hospitals. Steps are currently being taken to help relieve the pressures in the Emergency Departments.

State of our Hospitals Report 2006

Congratulations to all the hospitals in the Territory for finally being recognised as the hardest working hospitals in Australia. The Territory has been ranked number one for public hospital admissions, public patient admissions, elective surgery admissions and Emergency Department presentations (per 1000 population). This demonstrates that the Territory has the hardest working and busiest hospitals in Australia, and our nurses are at the front line of this health care delivery. We are hoping that this form of national recognition can be used to into obtaining better conditions for all nurses in the Territory.

Payroll Deductions

Some of you may have noticed that there was no fortnightly direct debit payment made at the end of April. The ANF NT Branch has experienced difficulties with our membership system, which have since been rectified. Rather than take another payment, the July meeting of Branch Council made a decision to absorb the costs rather than take the money from members at a later date. The Branch Council and I would like to apologise for any inconvenience that has been caused to anyone.

NTPS Certified Agreement Taskforce

NTPS CA Taskforce ends at the conclusion of the financial year. Forty-four projects were identified in the 2003-2006 Certified Agreement, in addition to some matters that were agreed to be looked at by the CEO of the DH&CS and the ANF. The final status of the NCAT project identified that 13 projects have been completed, 14 projects are nearing completion, four projects with significant impact on nursing in the NT require continuation beyond June 2006, and 13 projects that are outside the scope or influence of the NCAT.



MembersEquity
The Super Funds Bank

news briefs

Projects that need to be continued

Hospital staffing workload measures:

We are waiting on a decision from DH&CS Executive on how they will address this issue. This is being hotly discussed by the ANF and the OCPE and DH&CS, within this new round of Collective Agreement bargaining for 2006-2008.

Enrolled Nurses Scope of Practice:

A report was expected with the Minister in June for a decision on how or if to progress further.

Nurse Practitioner Project:

Minister Toyne has stated that he is committed to the project. A report was due to be tabled in June and will be acted on immediately. At time of going to print, no further updates on the status of this project has been made available.

Aggression Policy and Code - Remote Area Nurses:

This project requires ongoing commitment, management and review by remote health services and the DH&CS OH&S Committee, as it involves five separate agencies to develop an *Across Government Framework for Managing Aggression* in remote communities.

National Day of Action | 28 June 2006

There was a large turnout from all unions at Raintree Park Darwin, where the crowds were informed of some of the appalling tactics that the Howard Government has used to force Australian workers into an unfair system of industrial relations where the employers wield all the power.

The ANF NT Branch is prepared for the eventuality where an unscrupulous employer will force their nurses to sign unreasonable AWAs or lose their jobs. If this is happening to you or someone you know, please do not hesitate to contact us for advice and support.

Royal Darwin Hospital BBQ | 29 June 2006

In response to members who raised concerns that they could not take time off work or were unavailable to attend the Day of Action in Darwin, the ANF NT Branch in conjunction with the other unions represented at Royal Darwin Hospital and Darwin Private Hospital, held a BBQ in the hospital precinct over lunchtime the day after the National Day of Action. The day was a success with Members Equity supplying over 300 free sausage sandwiches to members of all unions. The BBQ also allowed a forum where information about the 'Worst Choices' IR reform could be passed on to members and to see how the different working groups have been affected by this industrial sabotage.

National Day of Action | 28 June 2006



from the branch office



Organiser's Desk

Mathew Gardiner

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New Arrivals

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Angela and David on the birth of their beautiful baby girl, Emelia Louise Wallace Phillips, on the 5th June. We all wish her the best and I am happy to say that Angela is adapting to life as a new mother. Angela would like to thank all the people who sent Emelia gifts and their well wishes.

Website Update

I am currently working my way through the website to keep pay rates and agreements current. There are weekly updates posted with regard to negotiations and we have links within the DHCS intranet, so it can be accessed in work areas. If there are any more items that you think would make the site better, please feel free to contact me and I will endeavour to make it happen.

NTPS Collective Agreement

The new 'Worst Choices' legislation has not only moved the goal posts but has changed the game entirely with regard to making collective agreements. The NT Public Sector Nurses are one of the first large employee groups to undertake negotiations under the current legislation.

Currently negotiations are continuing with the NT Government, to keep updated on the developments check the ANF NT Branch website and Job Delegates in your work areas. There is to be more member meetings in the different work places to decide on the Governments offers, keep an eye on your notice boards for the dates and times.

Job Delegate Training

Northern job delegate training was conducted from the 24th-26th July at the Christ Church Cathedral in Darwin. Thanks to Helena Dalton-Bridges from the QNU and all the delegates who attended for making the training such a success.

Job Delegate Conference

Planning for next years Job Delegate Conference has begun in earnest. The conference will be held at the start of May next year with job delegates from the different work areas attending. Job delegates, start thinking of the submissions and items that you would like included in the conference.

Closing Thought

The history of unionism in Australia is a long and glorious one. Over the years workers have banded together to fight unscrupulous bosses and managers.

Nurses are not immune to market forces and as health services, both private and public, continually restructure to make the almighty health dollar stretch further, this office has dealt with several cases concerning the loss of positions when such economic restructures occur.

Nurses need to stand together to stop being treated poorly, otherwise disrespect shown by employers will continue to worsen. In this uncertain era of industrial reform we must have the conviction to get our message across or endure the results of apathy and inaction.

"Conviction is worthless unless it is converted into conduct"

Thomas Carlyle (1795- 1881)

Industrial Relations Information

This section is to update you on the effects of the new Industrial Relations legislation.

Unfair dismissal

Taking away protections

If you are employed by a business with up to 100 employees, you no longer have legal protection against unfair dismissal.

Even if you work in a business with more than 100 employees, you will not be able to take unfair dismissal proceedings if you are sacked for 'Operational Reasons' (for example, restructuring).

Dismissal on a small number of discriminatory grounds remains unlawful

But if you are sacked unlawfully you will have to take action through the courts to seek compensation.

Estimates of the costs of such court action generally start at \$30,000 so it will be an expensive process.

The laws also make it far easier for employers to replace permanent staff with cheaper labour-hire, casual, contract workers or even overseas 'guest' workers.

The usual payout of a successful discrimination case is approximately six months wages.

If you earn less than \$60,000 a year the court costs alone will take all of your payout even if you win.

nursing development practice programs

The Nursing Development Practice Programs

by Ted Murphy

The Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services has a long history of providing support to nurses entering or re-entering the nursing profession. Now, whether newly graduated, from overseas or having been away from nursing practice for five or more years, the Department is able to offer a number of structured support programs tailored to meet the needs of nurses from these groups. By providing these support programs, patient safety and the high quality of nursing practice is maintained throughout the Northern Territory. The support programs offered by the Nursing Development Practice Programs (NDPP) are outlined below.

Graduate Nurse Program: A 12-month program, providing three clinical rotations (usually in a medical, surgical and a specialty area), six study days and structured means of support and feedback through regular Clinical Nurse Educator (CNE) contact, and identified assistance process and placement evaluations. Up to 90 GNP participants are recruited each year.

Re-entry Nurse Program: A 60-day competency assessment program aimed at nurses whose registration has lapsed and wish to return to nursing practice. The Nursing and Midwifery Board of the Northern Territory (NMBNT) has accredited this program and determines eligibility by issuing conditional registration for the purpose of competency assessment. RNP participants are assessed against the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse.

National Day of Action | 28 June 2006



Overseas Nurse Program: A 60-day competency assessment program, however the ONP is aimed at nurses with overseas qualifications wanting to undertake competency assessment to practice nursing in the NT. The NMBNT determines eligibility for the program, and upon assessment of the applicant's nursing qualifications, the board may issue conditional registration for competency assessment. The ONP participants are also assessed against the ANMC Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse.

The Preceptorship Program: Directly supports the NDPP, by providing training to nurses who take on the added responsibility of supporting participants from all programs. Participants attend a day-long workshop, examining the roles and responsibilities of the preceptor, as well as the principles of adult learning and assessment techniques. While these programs are coordinated at a Territory-wide level, the real work of the programs is conducted in the wards and at the bedside, and teams of dedicated CNEs based at hospitals in Alice Springs, Darwin, Katherine and Nhulunbuy work with both program participants and their preceptors to achieve the aims of the programs.

Given that the most important element of these programs is support for nurses in their workplace, the clinical competence of the program CNEs is paramount for the credibility of the programs. The challenge for the CNEs is maintaining this credibility with not only the program participants, but also with the clinical areas that we deal with on a daily basis. To do this, all team members regularly take advantage of opportunities to work in their respective areas of clinical specialty.

In order to continue the tradition of supporting new staff, the NDPP must remain responsive to the ever-changing demands of our profession. As we look to the future, anticipating these new challenges, it's reassuring to look back on the history of support for new nurses and reaffirm our fundamental reason for being - the safety of our patients and the maintenance of quality in our profession - something that will never change.

Site Visit Updates

As the ongoing various collective agreements (both public and private) continue, there will be site visits to relay the relative offers to ANF members. Keep an eye out for the meeting times and places.

Authorised by Yvonne Falckh Branch Secretary Australian Nursing Federation (NT Branch)
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