



Denis Blackford  
NT Branch Secretary

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**Moving interstate?**

If you are a financial member of the ANF, QNU or NSWNA you can transfer your membership by phoning your union branch. Don't take risks with your ANF membership transfer to the appropriate branch for total union cover. It is important for members to consider that nurses who do not transfer their membership are probably not covered by professional indemnity insurance.



**MembersEquity**  
The Super Funds Bank

## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

Hello colleagues,

The year for NT nurses has reflected experiences for those across the country with workplaces requiring more care for more patients by fewer nurses. Employers have demonstrated limited capacity to address the issues that have confronted nurses in this reality. The ANF NT Branch has therefore been very busy with nurses contacting us for advice and support on a range of workplace/workload issues.

The Australian public has re-elected the Federal Coalition Government with an increased majority and control of both houses of Parliament. The ANF nationally now has to lobby the new version of the Government on key issues such as improving the nursing workforce, nursing education access, aged care wage inequities and the establishment of a principal nurse advisor position at a national level.

I must add a personal view here. It does not bode well when I reflect on the recent words of the Federal Health Minister, Tony Abbott, expressed to nurses at the recent Asia Pacific Nursing Congress. He intimated that he felt nurses could endure the difficulties of the worsening health sector crisis because: 'they have a higher calling that compels them to confront every challenge' - no matter how difficult. It seems to me and I believe, to many other nurses, that this 'higher calling' is not going to improve the exodus of nurses as they confront the realities of their working lives.

The evidence is out there. The national review into the nursing workforce indicated that Australia would be about 30,000 nurses short by 2006. The Federal Government is promising around 4000 extra tertiary positions for new student nurses by 2008. The population is growing and health service access by the public is increasing.

In the NT the burden of chronic disease and lifestyle illnesses is impacting more and more, especially on the indigenous 28% of us. While this increases, the number of nurses, are becoming fewer - and those remaining have to do more with less.

What can nurses do to influence change and promote hope? The ANF has long said that the way to improving the professional and industrial circumstance of nurses is through them getting organised and active in their workplaces. ANF job delegates in workplace can be an effective resource for information and organisation. Through forming workplace committees, under the auspice of the ANF, to monitor and communicate issues within and without the workplace, the employer becomes aware they are being watched and monitored. They are more likely to be attentive and inclusive.

Through participating in employer initiated processes nurses can be seen as more engaged and formidable by the employer.

Nurses are the single biggest employee group in most health services and have the biggest potential industrial and professional power. We need to be seen as willing and capable of mobilising and using this power. It is in the interests of our patients and ourselves to do what we can to get the attention of policy makers and governments to ensure the allocation of resources within health services occurs in the context of nurses' views and the paramount interests of the patients.

May the coming Christmas and New Year be all you want it to be. I wish for more hope and less anger and frustration and our mantra could be: **Get interested - Get involved - Get active!**

*Merry Christmas, Happy New Year*

Denis Blackford [denis.ntanf@octa4.net.au](mailto:denis.ntanf@octa4.net.au)

## From the branch office



### Industrial Officer's Desk

Jane Carrigan  
*jane.ntanf@octa4.net.au*

It's that time of year again - Christmas and all it brings; family, friends, orphan Christmas parties, dinners, presents, quite a bit to eat and for many - no shortage of the demon fire water. It is the time of year where everyone winds down with the expectation of having a good time. Unfortunately, the above does not apply to many nurses at this time of year.

Staff shortages often mean nurses cannot take holidays. The combination of overtime (paid and I hate to write it, unpaid), highly pressured workloads/environments, school holidays and even the weather would test the seasonal goodwill of a saint.

While letters that often make their way to the *NT News* present nurses as nothing less than living saints (and so they should), the fact is we are often too hard on ourselves and each other in the workplace.

This Christmas message is a reminder that, despite overwhelming factors that can make us less than charitable to our colleagues, respecting their professionalism and treating them with respect and dignity is something that we should all strive for, at all times of year.

We are not saints and we are not always going to get it right. However, it is a good time to remember that the stressors attached to the profession could be greatly reduced by respecting ourselves and others.

As individuals we have complete control over ourselves. We often work in circumstances that are not ideal, but can take some control of the situation by changing how we respond. We can surprise ourselves and feel good simply by responding sensitively to others, rather than reacting to them.

I might pull up here least I start sounding like your mother! I do take this opportunity to wish everyone all the best of the season and for those of you who are getting a break, half your luck - have a wonderful time. For those of you who are not having a break, be kind to yourself and others and it may ease your work stressors. A safe Christmas to all.

### ANF NT October Road Show

The second ANF NT Roadshow for the year was in October. Our Organiser, Angela Phillips, took this popular event to most of the regional centres, and with the assistance of job delegates and supporters was able to bring ANF information to many nurses. Nurses were able to access information about current NT and national industrial issues as well as join or transfer membership from other Branches. Through visiting nurses in regional areas the Branch is able to raise its profile and keep nurses aware of the key benefits of the largest professional and industrial organisation for nurses in Australia. There will more Roadshows next year.

*Katherine District Hospital paediatric nurses visited during the October Roadshow*



*Ti Tree remote area nurses visited during the October Roadshow*



## Public sector remote area electricity subsidy

The ANF NT Branch has been notified by the OCPE that it is not going to pursue the proposed introduction of a new system of remote area electricity subsidy for public sector employees, including nurses. The OCPE said that it was not able to reach consensus with the public sector unions on the proposal. It may well be revisited by the public sector employer after the next NT election in 2005.

## NTPS Certified Agreement (CA) Taskforce

Details of steering committee minutes and related information can be accessed through the NTG Intranet website. The ANF NT Project Officer on the Taskforce, Kirstie Hawkins, can be contacted at [kirstie.hawkins@nt.gov.au](mailto:kirstie.hawkins@nt.gov.au) or on 8922 7025

## NTPS Nursing Career Structure Review

As reported in the last newsletter, the ANF NT Branch had formally expressed the disappointment and frustration of many public sector nurses at the slow progress of the NCSR - with no Project Officer in place and no committee meeting date set. The DH&CS CEO responded to the Branch indicating dismay at the concerns expressed by the ANF and stating the NCSR Project Officer had been identified (Gloria Gopel) and that a meeting would be held in October. It was emphasised in the letter that the DH&CS is committed to the review and wants to work collaboratively with the ANF NT Branch to provide a meaningful outcome for nurses.

The ANF NT Branch can report that the meeting of the steering committee occurred on 14 October. Discussion included: the neglect by the DH&CS to contact the appellants from the initial process; concerns with the Work Evaluation Tool that informed the outcome of the initial process; and, the development of a project plan. At the time of writing, a follow up meeting of the steering committee was scheduled for 17 November.

NTPS nurses can access more information about the NCSR steering committee process through the NTG intranet site.

## Condolences

The ANF NT Branch would like to our express sincere sympathy and condolences to Shirel Nomoa and her family on the tragic passing of her sister Robyn Waters. Robyn worked for the ANF NT Branch for several years until 2001 as an administrative officer. Shirel is long-term member of the ANF, job delegate and a past President of the Branch.



*Katherine Hospital Jack Roney Ward nurses, October Roadshow*



*Katherine Hospital Operating Theatre Manager, Chris Shepherd with ANF NT Branch Organiser, Angela Phillips, October Roadshow*

## ANF win: Katherine Hospital Theatre on call

The ANF NT on behalf of members at the Katherine Hospital Operating Theatres was able to retain the weekend on call rate for staff at \$3 per hour. The DH&CS elected not to continue the OCPE Determination relating to this extra payment - that had been in place for some years - earlier this year. The ANF argued that this change in workplace conditions did not involve any significant consultation with the staff affected and therefore was in breach of the Certified Agreement (CA). The DH&CS reviewed its position and agreed to continue the Determination until end of June 2005. In the meantime the ANF NT will be lobbying for the introduction of more appropriate on call rates for all NTPS nurses through the CA taskforce project looking into call rates for nurses.

## News briefs

### ANF NT Branch elections

As required under the ANF Federal Rules, the ANF NT Branch called for nominations for our Branch Executive. The number of nominations did not exceed the number of vacancies and so they were declared elected by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC). There were three outgoing Councillors and the ANF NT Branch thanks Virginia Roberts, Stephen Sturm and Ann Pollack for their contribution and support during their time on Council.

The new Executive and Branch Council is: President Neil Spencer, Darwin; Vice President Libby Clegg, Gove; Executive Councillors, Sherrie Pilkington, Darwin; Vickye Coffey, Gove; John Hodgson, Alice Springs; Wendy Corkill, Alice Springs; Branch Councillors: Andrea Moriarty, Darwin; Simon Murphy, Darwin; Paul Knott, Alice Springs; Denby Kitchener, Darwin; Jenny Palmer, Darwin; Cheryl Winter, Darwin; Richard Ashburner, East Arnhem.

The new Council and Executive took office for two years from 30 November.

### ANF NT Branch membership fees

The ANF NT Branch Council has decided to continue aligning membership fee increases with wage increases for NT Public Sector nurses. This is in keeping with the practice of other ANF Branches. Fee increases are never popular, however, it is necessary to increase them from time to time to maintain the financial position of the Branch and ensure the resource base is maintained for the benefit of all members. The ANF is solely funded by the fees of its members.

NTPS nurses received a 3% salary increase on 30 August. ANF NT fees will increase by 3% from 1 January 2005. The effective yearly increase for a RN will be about \$13 and for an EN, around \$10 per year. Membership fees are tax deductible.

### Audit report information

The ANF NT Branch Audit for 2003/04 has been completed and endorsed by Branch Council. All members are welcome to scrutinise the papers through contacting the ANF NT Branch. It is anticipated that audit information will soon be posted on the ANF NT website.

Visit our website: [www.anfnt.org.au](http://www.anfnt.org.au)

### NT ANF Branch office closure Christmas/New Year

The ANF NT Branch Office will be shut from close of business on Friday 24 December until Tuesday 4 January 2005. During this time, emergency support is available. Contact the office on 8920 0700 for details.

### Job delegates - Thank you

The ANF NT Branch office would like to thank the JDs who have assisted us with our mail outs and at the RDH Orientation Days. Your assistance and continued support is greatly appreciated.

### Request for office volunteers

The NT Branch office is frequently in need of volunteer support from members to assist the small ANF team on various tasks and projects.

Contact our Branch Organiser, Angela Phillips - 8920 0703. Members who can spare some time to assist can be in the running for free movie tickets.

*Katherine Community Health Roadshow*



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