



Yvonne Falckh  
NT Branch Secretary

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## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

The ANF NT Branch is currently involved in agreement negotiations on a number of fronts. The main agreement being the NTPS 2006-2008 union collective agreement. This will be discussed later in the Newsletter. Nurses currently affected by workplace disputes who may be experiencing difficulties with home loan repayments with Members Equity (ME) are encouraged to contact their representative for an individual assessment (see information provided by ME in this Newsletter).

The impact of the Howard Government's harsh IR laws will make it difficult for many families to enjoy their Christmas break this year. The ACTU has warned some employers may take advantage of recent amendments to the laws that allow them to stand workers down during periods of industrial action or when there is a "downturn" in business.

Despite these difficult times the ANF NT Branch staff wish all nurses a safe and happy Christmas and New Year season. The branch will be closed from Friday 22nd December to Tuesday 2nd January 2007. I will be available during this time on my mobile for any urgent enquiries.

### NTPS Nurses 2006-2008 Union Collective Agreement

Australian Nursing Federation NT has been in negotiations with the OCPE and DH&CS NT since May 2006. Nurses are frustrated with the way the negotiations are going as the NT government refuses to offer a salary increase above 3% per annum as per their "Wages Policy". Due to the groundswell from NTPS nurses demanding the ANF NT commence processes to allow protected industrial action, the Branch has sent an urgent letter to all members. We have lodged documentation to enable the process to occur (see the IR Information section).

ANF NT has been advised that the DH&CS will implement a workloads model (WA model) once the collective agreement has been signed. Since negotiations commenced in May 2006 we have been arguing the need to address workload issues affecting nurses throughout the NT, which has resulted in increased sick leave, excessive amounts of overtime being worked and problems with recruiting and retaining nurses. Many work units in the acute sector require an increase in nursing staff. This need has been identified by the Department's own consultants yet they refuse to make a financial commitment to providing more nurses.

The Department has identified a number of options for implementing a model at no extra cost. They propose increasing the EN to RN ratio and review the morning to afternoon shift overlap. ANF NT has made it very clear that under no circumstances will we allow the 10 hours nights to be affected. The Department's proposal to increase staffing at no cost is of great concern to the ANF NT.



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## from the branch office



### Organiser's Desk

Matthew Gardiner

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I have had people approach me recently and ask what a union is and what it is that we do. Having played a fair bit of sport when I was younger I like to use sporting analogies to describe what a union is. Being a member of a union is like being a member of a sporting club. When you join a sports club you are choosing to be part of a team that will co-operate to play your sport.

As a member of your club you don't expect someone else to go out and play your sport for you.

An effective team requires you to be an active participant in order for it to compete successfully. Also, a team strives to involve the players in the game so that everyone can play a part and everyone can share in the glory when there is a win.

To become a member of a sporting club, you pay your membership fee which gives the club resources to operate. These resources enable the club to compete, hire facilities, and employ staff and to purchase equipment. All these resources facilitate the ability of club members to enjoy their sport and win games.

The club is there to ensure that there are suitable playing conditions, there is a level playing field, you will be safe when you play, and that the other team is playing by the rules and shows up when they are supposed to. It also ensures the umpire is aware of any breach of the rules and takes appropriate action to ensure the game is played fairly.

So that is what I think a union is. We require every member to be a participant especially when the "Worst choices" laws have attempted to give one side an unfair advantage.

### Remember

A team is a group with a specific goal, which to achieve that goal requires the interdependent and collaborative effort of all of its members.

## IR Information Protected Industrial Action

Under Workchoices, industrial action is illegal unless it is 'protected industrial action', achieved by conducting a secret 'protected action ballot' and must meet the procedural and format requirements set out in s.109 of the Act. Applications are made to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) This is usually a postal ballot conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) in the NT, using a list of eligible voters supplied by the ANF.

Eligible voters are current financial members of the ANF, employed by the NTPS who will be covered by a new agreement. Once a ballot is called, electoral roles cannot be changed without making special application to the AEC. So it is vitally important that your address and contact details held by the ANF are correct.

The ballot would contain a list of industrial actions to be taken by members. These would be voted on by the current financial NTPS ANF Members.

These may include such actions as not carrying out non-nursing duties (work to rule), not doing overtime, wearing of T-shirts with issue slogans printed on them or arm bands. Extreme action may include canceling elective surgery, or closing beds.

A successful ballot for protected action requires every eligible member to vote with over 50% of the return supporting the action. Unreturned ballots count as a vote against industrial action.

### No response to the ballot means a no vote

Non-members cannot take part in the ballot or in any protected industrial action. As members you will be taking the risks while non-members will be enjoying your hard fought gains. Members, strongly encourage all non-members to join. A united workforce is a strong workforce and united we bargain, divided we beg.

Nurses need to be aware that an employer may take the option of not paying employees during protected industrial action. They may also dock you a minimum of four hours pay for any industrial action.

## news briefs

Collective Agreements	Current Situation
Juninga	Nurses will be invited to access the agreement negotiated for Frontier Services.
Frontier Services EBA	Negotiations are progressing.
Danila Dilba	Meetings have been held with staff and management. Staff voted to have a union collective agreement. Documents are being finalised.
Katherine West Health Board	Negotiations are underway.
Australian Red Cross Blood Service (NT)	Negotiations have commenced.
Darwin Private Hospital	Meetings have been held with nurses and items for a log of claims are being developed.
NT Public Sector Nurses	Letters have been sent to NTPS nurses advising of the bargaining current situation. Resolutions by nurses in many workplaces request the ANF NT continue negotiations. A second resolution requested the ANF NT prepare a secret ballot for the purpose of commencing protected industrial action.
Separate Remote Nurse Offer	Remote Area Nurses (RANs) have received a separate collective agreement offer. ANF NT has received correspondence rejecting the offer if it is to be viewed as a complete package. RANs generally reject the concept of annualising their salary in lieu of overtime, oncall and penalties. Only a small percentage of RANs accept the offer.

### Job Delegate Conference 2-3 May 2007

We will be holding our Biennial Job Delegate Conference on 2-3 May next year with outcomes to be taken to the National Conference.

If you want to influence how nursing in the Territory is done and the direction that the ANF will take, start working on your submissions.

### 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 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 download.

### Dates to remember

No intrastate visits will occur during December. The office will close from 1400 hours on Friday 22nd December and reopen on Tuesday 2nd January 2007. The Secretary will be available via mobile phone for urgent issues.

Schedule of visits to areas outside of Darwin for the first three months of 2007 will be made available shortly through job delegates.

### Welcome to our New Administrative Assistant

The Branch welcomes Natasha Smithwick to the position of Administrative Assistant. Natasha is a young mother with a delightful one year old boy, and her partner is currently serving in Iraq. Natasha will be the first point of contact for members contacting the office. Natasha will also update membership details.

## news briefs

### ANF NT Branch Executive and Council Elections

All nominees for the positions of Branch Council and Branch executive, with the exception of Branch Secretary, were recently declared in an uncontested election. Results are as follows:

Branch President	Shirel Nomoa
Vice President	Chris Murray
Executive Council	Karen Brown Frank Pearson
Branch Councilors	Denby Kitchener Andrea Moriarty Simon Murphy

Vacancies still exist for two NT Branch Executive positions and five Branch Councilors. Another election will be conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission to fill these vacancies. The ANF NT urges members from outside the Darwin region to nominate. It is important to have a well represented and balanced committee to enable nurses throughout the NT to have a voice in union decision making.

### Sponsor information

ANF NT is proud to be associated with Industry Fund Financial Planning (IFFP) and Members Equity Bank (ME). They have provided continued sponsorship and support to the Branch, especially during difficult times for members affected by WorkChoices.

**Members Equity Bank (ME)** was established as an initiative of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and various industry superannuation funds (ISFs). While the ACTU is looking after your rights at work, and industry superannuation funds are looking out for your retirement, ME is dedicated to servicing your immediate financial needs.

As an ANF NT Member, you are eligible for a suite of low cost banking products. Super Members Home Loan (SMHL), low cost credit card, low rate personal loan and a high interest two in one, transaction and savings account.

ME is also dedicated to supporting any customers who are experiencing financial hardship as a result of workplace disputes. Lockouts and other forms of industrial action are both emotionally and financially distressing and ME understands they can affect a worker's ability to meet minimum mortgage repayments. Any employee with an ME home loan who is currently affected by a workplace dispute is encouraged to call 1300 654 998 for an individual assessment.

Discover how Members Equity Bank can help your financial situation by visiting [membersequitybank.com.au](http://membersequitybank.com.au) or call 13 15 63 today.

**Industry Fund Financial Planning (IFFP)** has recently appointed a new Financial Planner to service the Northern Territory. Darwin based Sharyn Maxwell has had 10 years experience in the Financial Planning Industry. Sharyn can help ANF NT Members achieve their financial goals through good planning and investment. IFFP continue to offer a commission free service for ANF members and can be contacted on 8942 3904.



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