



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.

## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

Welcome to the June/July NT newsletter. In consultation with Branch Council, I have decided to publish this open letter to all members to provide background to recent changes within our Branch Council and Executive.

### *Open letter to the NT ANF members from the Branch Secretary*

Dear Colleagues,

The ANF NT Branch Council has changed recently. Several councillors resigned, temporarily affecting our Branch Executive's capacity to function. As a matter of some urgency, I facilitated an extraordinary Branch Council meeting on 15 April to identify a new Branch Executive and new signatories for the branch bank accounts.

I called for nominations from remaining and former councillors to become Branch Executive members. This would be in an interim capacity to cover the Branch in the lead up to the scheduled Branch elections in October/November this year. The meeting identified a new Branch Executive and signatories.

There have been differences of opinion within Branch Council predating my election as Secretary. I was aware of these differences through my previous role as a Branch Councillor. More recently, these issues were being addressed through a formal process supported by the ANF Federal Executive.

The resignations from Council in April were a surprise to me as we were working through an agreed process towards an agreed goal. The Council members who resigned are experienced and skilled people who had contributed well to the Branch. Choosing to resign from Council is unfortunate and I regret the loss of their experience and potential.

The group of Councillors who resigned, citing issues of conflict, is the same group who had issues of conflict with the Acting Branch Secretary before me as well as the former Secretary. This group have also been circulating documents implying that

previous resignations from Council were a result of conflict with me. These resignations were, as reported to me, related to issues of frustration and difference with this group.

Some concerns have been raised about the financial position of the Branch. I want to reassure you that the finances are good and are improving. The 2002/03 audit showed a significant surplus from a deficit the previous year. The budget passed by Branch Council in September last year projected a deficit, but now, projections indicate the year will end in surplus. The ANF NT Branch, as part of a national federation, keeps the ANF Federal Office informed of our financial position throughout the year. The Branch is audited annually as required by law. The audit documents are available for scrutiny by you, the membership.

Our membership is growing, by about 8% this year so far, and looks like continuing to do so. I have great optimism for the development and continuing improvement of our Branch. The challenges that confront so many nurses and finding solutions should be, and is, the focus of our Branch. It is my commitment to all members that our resources be utilised in the most efficient manner to meet the aims and objectives of the ANF for the benefit of members and the improvement of their working environments.

There are now casual vacancies on Branch Council. I encourage you to put an expression of interest to fill these vacancies. This is an opportunity for new members to inject a fresh approach to the way our Branch is managed. I welcome your interest.

The new interim Executive membership is:  
Cheryl Winter, President (DPH);  
Neil Spencer, Vice President (TEMHS);  
Denis Blackford (Secretary); Wendy Corkill (ASH); Libby Clegg (GDH); Vickye Coffey (GDH); John Hodgson (CAMHS).

Branch Councillors:

Denby Kitchener (RDH); Elizabeth Pollack (RDH); Richard Ashburner; Virginia Roberts (TEMHS).

## From the branch office



### Organiser's Desk

Angela Phillips (nee Wallace)  
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'Getting Informed, Getting Organised, Getting Results' is the theme this year for Job Delegate Training. Twenty-two Job Delegates (JDs) attended "Top

End" training on 20-22 April. The ANF NT Branch would like to thank them for taking part in the program. The training further consolidated the experienced JD's and the "new" JD's ideas, skills and strategies which will be used to advance a collective workloads campaign which will commence in the "Top End" on 1 July 2004. (Central Australia will commence after their training in July).

The Workloads Campaign, which I mentioned above, will be launched in July 2004 in the "Top End". JDs will be meeting prior to this to organise and facilitate education sessions in their worksites. Campaign kits will be given to each work area. So look out for further information or ask your JD in your work area for further information.

Worksite visits are continuing throughout the year. The visits will remain informal and either the ANF or JDs in your work areas will advise you when the meeting will take place.

ANF NT Branch Roadshows during the months of March-May have once again been successful and well received. The ANF NT Branch welcomes all new members. Members Equity (the union bank) proved once again to be a great hit with and we thank the Regional Manager Steve Buethke for his assistance and sponsorship. Although, Steve is still having trouble with the acronyms nurses use. For example, Steve thought DON was a smart way of calling the management the mafia. Thanks also to Janis Adams from HESTA and Virtual Communities for their continued support and sponsorship and special thanks to the job delegates.

### Dates to remember

#### Job Delegate Training

Alice Springs: 27-29 July

#### Road Show Dates

Tennant Creek: 4 October Ti Tree: 5 October

Alice Springs: 6-8 October Katherine Area: 18-19 October

RDH: 27-28 October DPH: 29 October

#### ANF Merchandise

The ANF merchandise that has been available on our Roadshows and worksite visits has proved popular with many members. We have more supplies at the office so if you want an ANF cap, water bottle, ID lanyard, ANF badge, etc, please contact us and we can arrange to have your request mailed to you.... at your expense.

### Industrial Officer's Desk

Jane Carrigan  
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The Federal Elections are set for later this year and for those of you who pore over your ANJ you will be aware that aged care has been a particular ANF focus. It appears to be universally accepted that the lot of both residents and staff within aged care is less than it could be. Indeed I don't think it overstates it to refer to the issue as a crisis in aged care. Of course at the forefront of this crisis, for the ANF, is nursing staff working within aged care facilities.

One of the concerns directly impacting on nursing (and PCA) staff is the move to reduce RN hours and the issue of rostering to maximise the cost-effectiveness of these facilities. While one cannot ignore the requirement to run such facilities within a budgetary framework, the reality, in our view, is a budgetary framework appears, in some instances, to be at the expense of the 'care factor' and the professional requirements of staff.

The ANF NT Branch has just completed a two-day hearing, on behalf of the nursing staff of Hetti Perkins Aged Care, at the Australian Industrial Relations Commission in Alice Springs, addressing the issue of reduction of an RN position and family friendly rostering. The issues, as usual, were multi layered looking at the flow on effect of managements proposed changes. Of concern for the ANF was how the employer, Aboriginal Hostels Ltd (AHL), sought to rely on industry standards in support of their changes. We argued that closer examination reveals that rather than following 'industry standard' - which is clearly delineated in legislation, 'industry standards' are being replaced, by default, with industry practise. Industry practise, we say, falls well short of legislated industry standard.

The disappointing aspect in this matter is the AHL, a Federal Government body, are missing the opportunity to be seen to be setting the aged care standard rather than follow the nebulous notion of 'industry practise'. It is open to viewing 'industry practise' as sacrificing care, of both staff and residents, to the bottom line of costings. In an election year we should be demanding more of our government, irrespective of their political persuasion.

The Commission will be handing down its decision in early June, a decision we hope will have a positive outcome for our members who, at great personal cost, have taken a very principled stand on this matter.

## News briefs

### NTPS Salary Sacrifice

Salary sacrifice remains a conundrum for some NTPS nurses endeavouring to seek clarification from the DH&CS as to whether they can access the expanded arrangements under the new Certified Agreement. The information provided to the ANF by the DH&CS and NT Treasury, is that nurses who are deemed by their employer to be working in areas that specifically relate to public hospital work and acute care can access the new arrangements. The employer has indicated that it intends to assess each area that may have some uncertainty as to whether it meets the requirements as described in taxation legislation.

### NTPS CA Taskforce

The selection process for the Taskforce positions is underway and at the time of writing in May the ANF expects to identify the successful applicant for the ANF position soon. When all positions are filled, the project will get underway and will run for two years.

### NTPS Nursing Career Structure (NCS) Review

The first meeting of the steering committee was scheduled for the end of May. The DH&CS Principal Nurse Adviser, Greg Rickard, who is coordinating the process, has cited workloads and the availability of steering committee members as contributing to the delay in having the first face-to-face meeting. The first meeting will be a half-day workshop to be followed up with weekly meetings. Submissions from nurses seeking to have their NCS issue considered are sought by the committee.

*NT Nurses at May Day 2004*



*Nurses from Alice Springs Renal Unit during ANF NT Roadshow*



*NT Nurses at May Day 2004*

### May Day 2004

On May Day, 3 May, about 15 nurses marched with the ANF banner through Darwin with other union members to the esplanade overlooking the harbour. An evening of music, dance and good food followed.

### NT Midwives Take Out Awards

On International Midwives Day a midwife from Katherine District Hospital, Jan Lockett, was honoured as both National Midwife of the Year and NT Midwife of the year. Kerry Ruane from the RDH Birthing Suite was awarded NT runner up. Congratulations to Jan and Kerryn from your colleagues across the NT. A positive indication of the excellence of our midwives underscored by this national and NT recognition.

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

## Questions - Ask the ANF

If you have a question relating to issues in your work environment or professional life send an email to us at [ntanf@octa4.net.au](mailto:ntanf@octa4.net.au). We will respond anonymously in the next newsletter.

***An Alice Springs nurse writes to ask what are our rights with regards to being summoned to a meeting with management, particularly if no specific details have been provided about the reason for the meeting.***

*If you are called to a meeting you have the right to know what the meeting is about before you attend. You are not required to attend meetings outside your normal working hours. If the meeting time is not convenient (eg, at the end of your shift) ask for a meeting in paid time.*

*No nurse should ever be compelled to attend a meeting on their own and you are entitled to a support person. It is inappropriate for any nurse to be taken to a room for a meeting where there has been no notice and where the nurse has no idea of what the meeting is about.*

*If you are asked to be a support person at a meeting, do take notes and record what is said; do ask for a break if the person you are supporting becomes upset during the meeting; don't argue during the meeting (because you are there as a support person not an advocate).*

*If you attend a meeting on one issue, and during the meeting other unrelated issues are raised, listen to the other issues but do not respond to the time. Instead, arrange for another meeting to discuss the other issues.*

*If you feel comfortable attending a meeting on your own, then do so, but don't hesitate to leave the meeting at any stage to get a support person should you become concerned about the content of the discussions or the behaviour of those at the meeting.*

*Don't respond immediately to allegations made for the first time at a meeting. Ask for the allegations in writing and take all the time necessary to prepare a response and if necessary, seek assistance from the ANF.*

*During the meeting listen to what is being said but don't respond immediately if you feel you need time to consider the points being raised or any allegations being made. You can always respond later in writing and you can do so after seeking advice and assistance from the ANF.*

*If you are feeling harassed during a meeting let the other party know that you are feeling harassed and that you would like to adjourn the meeting to another time.*

**Source: The Western Nurse, April 2004**

## Don't get burnt by underinsurance

It's hard to believe, but millions of Australians gamble their most precious possessions every year to save a few hundred dollars on insurance.

One in three Australian households risks losing everything\*. They have no contents insurance at all.

That's a big risk to take - especially when complete peace of mind can cost as little as a few hundred dollars a year.

When it comes to home building insurance, the figures are equally disturbing, almost one in ten Australian homes are not insured at all and a third of homes are underinsured\*.

Many people who take these risks say, "It won't happen to me." But, tragedies such as the Canberra bushfires highlight the fact that disasters can and do happen. The damage bill for these bushfires alone is expected to reach over \$70 million.

Aside from natural disasters occurring, one out of every 10 Australian homes are broken into, or are the target of an attempted break-in, every year\*.

Although it is difficult to prepare for a natural disaster, there are simple steps you can take to stop your home from becoming the next robbery statistic such as:

### **DO:**

- > Have an alarm and sensor lights fitted.
- > Secure all doors and windows with quality locks.
- > Leave a light or radio on while you're away to make your home look lived in.
- > Record the make, model and serial numbers of your possessions when possible.
- > Secure driveway and access gates.
- > Cancel papers, ask neighbours to collect mail, and turn down the ring volume on your phone if you're going away.

### **DON'T:**

- > Leave house keys in a secret hiding spot.
- > Help burglars get in by leaving garden tools or ladders about.
- > Leave notes for people telling them when you'll return home.
- > Advertise new purchases of electrical appliances or other valuables by leaving packaging in plain view.

Many stolen items recovered by police are never returned to their proper owners because they can't be traced.

Recording the make, model and serial numbers of your possessions is an easy way of identifying them if they do go missing - and, it increases the chance of them being returned.

Remember, it pays to update your home and contents insurance regularly to ensure you're adequately covered in case of theft, fire, cyclones or damage to prevent you and your family from getting burnt against the unexpected.

*\*Underinsurance and non-insurance statistics compiled by the Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) in 2002. This advice has been prepared without taking into account your objectives, financial situation or needs. Therefore, before you act on the advice, you should assess whether it is appropriate for you, in light of your objectives, financial situation or needs. If this advice recommends that you should acquire a particular financial product, you should obtain a Product Disclosure Statement for that product and consider the information in it before deciding to acquire the product.*

**Disclaimer:** The ANF NT Branch bears no responsibility for particular outcomes for members through contacting any service advertised in this newsletter.

