



N³ET E-Update (No. 02/2004)

JUNE 2004 TASKFORCE MEETING

The National Nursing and Nursing Education Taskforce (N³ET) was established in November 2003. Following each meeting an electronic update (E-Update) will be prepared and circulated to interested stakeholders. E-Updates are brief summaries of the key issues from each Taskforce meeting or other recent news/matters.

N³ET Website launched

The N³ET website has now gone "live" at www.nnnet.gov.au and is central to the way the Taskforce aims to keep stakeholders up to date with its work, how the recommendations will be implemented and how the work is progressing. Within the first few weeks since the launch many individuals and organisations have registered their interest. If you wish to register, follow the website pages to "Stakeholder Registration" and complete your registration on line.

National strategy for health workforce highlights the work of N³ET

The recently released Australian Health Ministers' Conference (AHMC) [National Health Workforce Strategic Framework \(2004\)](#) underscores the importance of the N³ET work. The Framework represents Australia's first attempt to establish a comprehensive national approach to guide health workforce policy and planning and Australia's investment in its health workforce throughout the decade. The Framework focuses on delivering a vision for the Australian health workforce, meeting challenges proactively and ensuring that actions are sustainable and linked to an overall direction. The nursing workforce and education reforms to be driven by the Taskforce are clearly aligned Framework and the ways in which the Taskforce undertakes its work will be guided by its principles.

Work on recommendations underway

Work is now underway on the first of the *Our Duty of Care* recommendations to be implemented. Details of how these recommendations will be put into action will be available on N³ET [website](#). In brief:

- **Nursing Education and Workforce Forums** (Recommendation 3) will be convened in each state and territory. The forums will support the work of the Taskforce in implementing recommendations as well as consider local or regional perspectives. The Chief Nurses have agreed that there should be a common framework for the forums and the Taskforce is supporting this by developing a process to ensure the representation and access to the forums is consistent and there are mechanisms for robust dialogue on the reforms.
- Work on Recommendation 24 will focus on using a framework of outcome indicators to evaluate the impact of the Commonwealth's recent increase in funding commitment to **clinical education** in undergraduate nursing courses. This work will also assist in identifying any changes to funding that may be required in the future, and will identify best practice models of clinical practicum. The aim is to promote uptake of sustainable and innovative educational models that achieve the best outcomes for students, patients, the nursing profession and the health care industry.
- **Research and Training for Nurses** (Recommendation 8). Although there is evidence to suggest that the strength of clinical research in nursing is growing, the lack of funding for research conducted by nurses is limited. The purpose of this project is to quantify the number of places allocated to nurses through the Research Training Scheme and consider the enablers and disablers to increasing the number of places available. In addition, priority areas for future nursing research and possible funding options will be identified.
- **Specialty postgraduate education and re-entry programs**. In implementing recommendation 25, this project will consider the availability of scholarship funding to nurses wishing to undertake postgraduate courses in specialty areas; examine current shortages by specialty area; and, make recommendations to AHMAC regarding any



future funding support for both specialty postgraduate education and re-entry programs for nurses.

- Work on recommendation 12 will enhance **career pathways** for nurses, and those who wish to become nurses by strengthening articulations between courses for nurses and between courses for other categories of health care workers. The project will draw together matrices that map existing articulations, identify the limitations of existing articulations and indicate where opportunities for improvement exist. The project will also explore ways to maximise opportunities for Recognition of Current Competency (RCC) in enrolment processes for nurses and health care workers.
- The Taskforce is currently awaiting the outcomes of a project undertaken by ANC on Nurse Practitioners. It is anticipated that this work will be important to consider in planning how the Taskforce will implement Recommendation 5 **National Standards for Nurse Practitioners**.

With the initial projects underway, the next recommendations the Taskforce is commencing work on are:

- Rec. 4 Nationally consistent scope of practice for all nurses
- Rec. 6 National ANCI principles to underpin legislation and registration
- Rec. 7 Care Workers not covered by legislation
- Rec. 28 Work organisation
- Rec. 30 Workplace culture
- Rec. 34 Expansion of opportunities in VET and VET-in-Schools

The initial steps in the process are to scope the work to be done for each recommendation, to consider how to carry out the work and how it intersects with other work being done in the area. When prepared, summaries of these projects will be available on the website and will also be included in the next N³ET **E-Update**.

Care Workers not covered by Legislation

Unregulated care workers (such as care assistants) are employed in a range of settings including health, education, disability, aged care and community. As care moves into different settings and workforce shortages are documented, the roles of various workers in the delivery of care are increasingly coming under scrutiny. There is currently debate about these workers in aged care and acute care and there are a number of organisations/groups that have views about these workers. Some have raised the issue of regulation of these workers. The Taskforce has noted the excellent work done by the Nurses Board South Australia, *Summary of Issues Paper: Inquiry into the Role and Function of Unregulated Care Workers in South Australia (2003)* that points to the highly complex nature of this issue.

The Taskforce has been referred recommendations that directly relate to this group of workers, namely Recommendations 7, 35, 12 and 34. Further, the role of this group of workers will be considered in the context of several other recommendations about how teams function and deliver health care (Recommendations 27, 28). This work will occur over the next 6-12 months and will form an important foundation to then consider issues.

For more information (including E-Updates) on N³ET, go to www.nnnet.gov.au