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# N<sup>3</sup>ET NEWSLETTER



**N<sup>3</sup>ET Statement of Endeavour: The N<sup>3</sup>ET Taskforce is committed to building an enhanced and sustainable healthcare system through the promotion of professional visibility and pride, quality education and regulation to nationally consistent standards and capacity in practice, education and research for all nurses and midwives across Australia.**

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## N<sup>3</sup>ET Completes First Quarter



*Nurse Specialisation*

Following the inaugural edition of the N<sup>3</sup>ET newsletter in June 2004, the Taskforce has been actively progressing the implementation of the first group of recommendations from the National Review of Nursing Education (2002): *Our Duty of Care* earmarked as a priority, namely:

- Recommendation 3 - Nursing Education & Workforce Forums
- Recommendation 4 - Nationally Consistent Scope of Practice
- Recommendation 5 - National Standards for Nurse Practitioners
- Recommendation 8 - Research & Training for Nursing
- Recommendation 12 - Maximising Education Pathways
- Recommendation 24 - Clinical Education Funding
- Recommendation 25 - Commonwealth Assistance for Specialty & Re-entry Courses

This progress was facilitated by the approval of the N<sup>3</sup>ET Workplan by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC) in late-August 2004. Project Outlines can be found on the N<sup>3</sup>ET web site at <http://www.nnet.gov.au/> and on Page 4 of this newsletter.

In addition to the Taskforce's existing work, the Australian Health Workforce Officials Committee (AHWOC) recently appointed the Taskforce to oversee implementation of recommendation from further work relating to mental health and nurse specialisation (refer to Project Spotlight on page 3).

What has become more and more apparent to the Taskforce as work has progressed is how interrelated a number of the recommendations are and what these relationships mean to the nursing and midwifery professions - a challenging yet dynamic aspect of the work at hand.

The Taskforce's progress would not have been without the support and assistance from a number of stakeholders and government organisations. The Taskforce will continue to engage with stakeholders with a commitment to ensure that nurses and midwives, including those in remote and isolated areas, are aware of the Taskforce's work. Page 2 features an article on the organisations we have been meeting with.

An overwhelming number of individuals and organisations, have registered as stakeholders. Registrations have assisted the Taskforce with identifying key areas of interest - areas that will be featured in future N<sup>3</sup>ET updates and newsletters. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your interest and ongoing support.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the N<sup>3</sup>ET newsletter that highlights our first achievements.

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## Taskforce Welcomes Adjunct Professor Kathy Baker to N<sup>3</sup>ET



The month of September welcomed Professor Kathy Baker to the Taskforce as one of the two nominees of the State/Territory Health Ministers.

By way of background, Kathy was appointed to the position of Chief Nursing Officer of New South Wales in July 2004 following the resignation of Professor Mary Chiarella who previously held the Taskforce appointment.

Kathy brings a wealth of expertise and experience to N<sup>3</sup>ET. In addition to her vast clinical experience in operating rooms, midwifery and cardio-thoracic intensive care and nursing education, Kathy's previous roles have seen her at the forefront of significant change in health. Her interests include: organisational change, culture, leadership and strategic workforce development and management - areas of importance in the Taskforce's work.

## Update on Meetings with Stakeholders & Attendance at Conferences

Over the last four months, the Taskforce has continued to focus on engaging with its stakeholders to begin establishing networks to assist in the implementation of the various recommendations.

Since the last issue of the N<sup>3</sup>ET newsletter (June 2004), the Chair of the Taskforce, Adjunct Professor Belinda Moyes, has met with a number of key organisations: The Australian Nursing Federation (ANF), The College of Nursing, The National Aged Care Alliance, The Australian Healthcare Association, and The Health Services Union of Australia. Belinda also regularly engages with the Australian & New Zealand Council of Chief Nurses.

In addition, Professor Moyes has attended meetings with the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Council (ANMC), including a roundtable discussion on the role and competencies of Enrolled Nurses, as well as an ANMC Council meeting. The Taskforce continues to have ongoing discussions with the ANMC regarding Recommendation 5 – National Standards for Nurse Practitioners (please refer to article below).

Belinda has been invited to speak on the Taskforce's work at several recent conferences/forums throughout Australia, which have included: The Directors of Nursing Services National Forum (Melbourne); Council of Nursing & Midwifery Leaders Forum (Canberra); Meeting of The Council of Deans of Nursing & Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand)(Brisbane); The Association of Queensland Nurse Leaders Conference (Brisbane); The Australian Private Hospitals Association National Congress (Gold Coast); Dimensions in Health Care Conference (incorporating the 15th Casemix Conference)(Sydney); and The Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital Health Care Symposium – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Epidemics.

The Taskforce is presently working with the Offices of the Chief Nurses to establish the Nursing Education & Workforce Forums (Recommendation 3). Professor Moyes will be travelling to Western Australia on 11 November 2004 to participate in the first forum being held in that state. Prior to the WA forum, she has been invited to attend the ANF Executive Meeting in Sydney on 09 November 2004.

On 21 September 2004, Dr Christine Breakwell, Senior Policy Analyst with the Taskforce Secretariat, attended and presented at the National Enrolled Nurse Association & Enrolled Nurse Professional Association (NSW) 6<sup>th</sup> National Enrolled Nurse Association Conference in Sydney. Dr Breakwell provided the attendees with an overview of the Taskforce and how the Taskforce's work challenges the existing context of health within Australia.

The Taskforce hopes that its involvement at these meetings and speaking engagements will provide nurses, other healthcare professionals and organisations with an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns and provide feedback. We are committed to "building an enhanced and sustainable healthcare system"... "for all nurses and midwives across Australia".

## N<sup>3</sup>ET Statement on the Nurse Practitioner (NP) Standards Report (2004) by the ANMC

The Taskforce considers that the Nurse Practitioner Standards Report (2004) commissioned by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) is good formative work that captures the current emergent role of Nurse Practitioners (NP) in Australia.

N<sup>3</sup>ET has been tasked by the Health Ministers to ensure national consistency for Nurse Practitioners. The Taskforce is of a view that competency standards need to be located within a broader context and the successful development and adoption of the NP role requires a comprehensive, collaborative and unified approach by government, education providers, regulators, employers and the wider nursing community. Accordingly, over the next 18 months the Taskforce will implement Recommendation 5 of the National Review of Nursing Education - National Standards for Nurse Practitioners. The ANMC Competency Standards will stand as a formative piece of work relating to the assessment of competency by regulatory authorities within this context.

N<sup>3</sup>ET notes that many of the recommendations coming from the Nurse Practitioner Standards Report (2004) require consideration by, and contribution from, a range of key stakeholders. Therefore, the Taskforce proposes that the body of the Nurse Practitioner Standards Report (2004) stand as an important first step that can be built upon, but that the recommendations should be initially considered by the ANMC, State and Territory Chief Nurses, State and Territory Nurse Regulatory Authorities and the Taskforce to determine a way forward that is consistent with the direction of the work the Taskforce is mandated to implement.



# PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

## REFERRAL OF NURSE SPECIALISATION WORK BY HEALTH MINISTERS

Recently, Health Ministers have requested that the Taskforce consider a number of issues related to nursing specialisation.

Issues associated with nurse postgraduate education were canvassed initially in the National Review of Specialist Education (Russell et al. 1997) and more recently in the National Review of Nursing Education (2002, pp170-174).

Some of the issues identified were:

- Lack of an agreed definition of speciality nurses and agreed framework for the provision of speciality nursing education in Australia.
- Proliferation of postgraduate speciality courses offered by universities at varying levels of quality; length; mode of offering; balance between clinical/theory components; eligibility criteria and qualifications gained.
- Variation between what is recognised as a sufficient level of qualifications between states, even when a nurse registration board endorses qualifications for practice in an area such as mental health.
- Costs associated with undertaking specialist education.
- Resulting quality and workforce planning problems.

These issues remain current today and, therefore, Health Ministers have referred this matter to the Taskforce for further consideration. In particular, the Taskforce has been requested to develop:

- An agreed definition of specialist nursing.
- An agreed framework for nursing specialisation and the development and attainment of postgraduate qualification.

This is an exciting piece of work; one that will require significant input from a broad range of stakeholders. The Taskforce will be consulting and engaging with nurse regulatory authorities, professional colleges and associations, Deans of Nursing and Midwifery, state and territory governments, nursing unions, and public/private employer groups. Nurses will have opportunity to participate at a number of levels.



## REFERRAL OF MARKETING RECOMMENDATION 1 - MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE REPORT

In late June 2004, the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC), upon the advice of the Australian Health Workforce Officials Committee (AHWOC), and in conjunction with the National Mental Health Working Group (NMHWG), recommended that **Marketing Recommendation 1** of the **Australian Mental Health Nurse, Supply, Recruitment and Retention (2003)** report, be referred to the Taskforce to be addressed as part of the Taskforce's work on the image of nursing (Recommendation 9).

Marketing Recommendation 1 consists of developing and implementing a clearly articulated marketing strategy that communicates the positive and attractive aspects of mental health nursing. Positive messages that may attract people include:

- mental health nursing provides opportunities to practise in a variety of health care settings, with opportunities to work with a high degree of autonomy;
- mental health nursing provides a work environment that is challenging, dynamic, intriguing and requires "thinking outside the square", and as such there is the opportunity to use a wide variety of different skills and talents;
- mental health nursing is an area that enables the practitioner to provide genuine caring environment' through a personal, individual, holistic model of care, within a paradigm of recovery;
- mental health nurses help others by making a major positive impact on the lives of both mental health consumers and carers and to the well being of the wider community; and as such nurses' efforts are generally greatly appreciated by the patients and family; and
- mental illness is common in the community and mental health nursing is, therefore, an essential community service.

A copy of the full report may be found at: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/amwac/reports.html>

The Taskforce looks forward to working with mental health nurses and organisations in the public and private healthcare sectors to create and enforce the positive messages noted above.



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## RECOMMENDATION 21 - ENROLLED NURSE COMPETENCIES

On 27 October 2004, the Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (Skills Council), in coordination with the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Council (ANMC), held an Industry Reference Group (IRG) meeting in Sydney to commence the project, "Placement of the Enrolled Nurse Qualifications & Competency Standards in the Health Training Package", in line with the implementation of Recommendation 21 from the National Review of Nursing Education 2002: *Our Duty of Care* report. This project forms part of the Skills Councils work to review the Health Training Package (HLT02).

Recommendation 21 focuses on ensuring that the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC; previously known as ANC and ANCI) **competencies for enrolled nurses** are incorporated in the existing or new Australian National Training Authority sponsored training packages and, when doing so, take into account the evolving models of care and changes in supervisory practice. Accordingly, the aim of this project is to develop national qualifications and competency standards for Enrolled Nurses within the Health Training Package (HLT02). The findings of the Australian Nursing Council Inc. (ANCI) report entitled, "An Examination of the Role and Function of the Enrolled Nurse and Revision of Competency Standards" will greatly assist the developments of the project.

The Chair of the Taskforce is participating in the IRG, as the Taskforce has a monitoring and reporting role in this project, which is closely related to our work on Recommendation 4 – A Nationally Consistent Scope of Practice.

The IRG is seen as a vital resource providing an essential means of accessing up-to-date data and high-level strategic advice about industry needs. Selection of membership to the IRG was undertaken in consultation with the ANMC. The Skills Council and the ANMC will work collaboratively to set the direction and consultation for the placement of units of competency and qualification(s) to cover Enrolled Nurses working within all settings in each State and Territory in the Training Package.

For more information on the progress of the IRG, please visit the Skills Council web site at: <http://www.cshisc.com.au/>

In the context of the review of the Health Training Package, a **competency standard** refers to "an industry-determined specification of performance which sets out the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to operate effectively in employment. Competency standards are made up of units of competency, which are themselves made up of elements of competency, together with performance criteria, a range of variables, and an evidence guide. Competency standards are an endorsed component of a training package". More information is available from the National Training Information Service site at: <http://www.ntis.gov.au/>

## National Review of Nursing Education 2002: *Our Duty of Care* report

### REC 3 - NURSING EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE FORUMS

In July 2004, in conjunction with the Chief Nursing Officers (CNOs) of Australia, a national framework for Nursing Education & Workforce Forums was developed. Forums have now been planned in all jurisdictions and are on track to be established by November 2004.

Throughout 2005, the Taskforce and CNOs will formulate a process to support the forums, including the development of a monitoring process and an evaluation framework with the jurisdictions. The outcome of forums will be reported back to the Health & Education Ministers by May 2006.

### REC 8 – RESEARCH & RESEARCH TRAINING FOR NURSING

We are presently conducting a scoping exercise to establish the number of current and projected nursing research places in universities. At the conclusion of the exercise (December 2004), the Taskforce will develop a framework of key nursing research priorities and options for future funding.

### REC 4 - A NATIONALLY CONSISTENT SCOPE OF PRACTICE

The Taskforce is currently researching existing scopes of practice of nurses and midwives across Australia in order to prepare a status report on determinants of scope of practice and variations between the jurisdictions. The outcomes of the progress report will provide the foundation for developing a national approach to achieving consistent scopes of practice. The Taskforce will report to the Australian Health Ministers' Conference on legislation reforms that may be required by March 2006.

The Taskforce's work on Enrolled Nurses' Scope of Practice (Recommendation 4) is proceeding alongside the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council project to incorporate Enrolled Nurse Competencies into the Health Training Package (Recommendation 21). The Taskforce is striving to align these two pieces of work so that national consistency in scopes of practice for enrolled nurses can be achieved.

### REC 5 - NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR NURSE PRACTITIONERS

The Taskforce's mandated work over the next 18 months is to deliver a nationally consistent approach to Nurse Practitioners. To do this, a comprehensive strategy that is cross sectoral, grounded in health workforce policy and planning and aligned with broader legislative reform and work on scope(s) of practice is being developed. In this context, the current barriers to the NP role development and uptake will be highlighted (such as legislation and funding) and the work on greater consistency in relation to nursing specialty/specialisation will be coordinated.

### REC 24 - CLINICAL EDUCATION FUNDING

The Taskforce is working with stakeholders to develop a framework for the evaluation of the Commonwealth's funding commitment to clinical education in undergraduate nursing courses. We are presently looking at the profile of current and future expenditure of funding for clinical practice.

We will look at identifying and promoting sustainable and innovative models of clinical practicum that contribute to optimal outcomes for students, patients, the nursing profession and the health

### REC 12 - MAXIMISING EDUCATION PATHWAYS

Phase 1 of the implementation of Recommendation 12, which is to be completed by December 2004, will be to establish a map of articulation pathways in order to prepare a status report indicating the limitations of existing articulation pathways, barriers to articulation and opportunities to strengthen articulations and transitions. Phase 2 will begin in June 2005 by addressing the issues identified in Phase 1 in order to develop a framework for consistency in approaches to recognition of prior learning (RPL) and recognition of current competency (RCC) in enrolment processes for nurses and health care workers.

### REC 25 - COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIALTY & RE-ENTRY COURSES

The Taskforce is currently conducting two audits with regard to Commonwealth assistance for speciality and re-entry courses:

**Phase 1:** an audit of postgraduate courses and scholarship funding available to Division 1 nurses wishing to undertake such courses, is currently underway. The data from the audit will then be compared to information about known nursing shortages and an assessment of the degree of concordance will be undertaken.

**Phase 2:** an audit of re-entry courses including participant numbers and cost associated with providing such courses (including costs charged to participants). This data will be analysed and recommendation(s) about the applicability of loan scheme assistance for re-entry will be prepared

The findings of both phases will be the basis of a report that will be prepared for the Australian Health



Kindly distribute the N³ET Newsletter to any interested colleagues. If possible, we would appreciate your posting a copy of the N³ET Newsletter on your staff bulletin board.

The next N³ET Newsletter will be available in **February 2004**. Upcoming issues will include further Project Spotlights on the priority recommendations. Stay tuned....



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To register as a stakeholder, please register on-line at: <http://www.nnet.gov.au/>