

**Our Duty of Care – Recommendation 25**

**COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE FOR SPECIALTY & RE-ENTRY COURSES**

**What is this project about?**

A number of state and territory reports which have examined the reasons why nurses have left the profession quote the high cost of maintaining professional competency and skills and undertaking formal specialist postgraduate education as key factors. These factors have formed the basis for governments providing scholarship funding to nurses wishing to specialise in clinical areas with recognised shortages and to encourage nurses to return to the workforce. However, the approach to scholarship funding is fragmented, inequitable and variable. It was also noted that the financial burden placed upon nurses wishing to regain registration was a deterrent to returning to the workforce.

Concern was also expressed to the Review in relation to provision of specialist education for areas with low numbers of students wishing to undertake the course at any given time. Some State and Territories universities are unable to provide courses that have small numbers of participants. This has led to the development of generic courses with a broad theory base and distance education modules.

In an attempt to address funding support and quality issues identified as part of the Review deliberations in relation to specialist nursing practice and re-entry programs, a more cooperative and coordinated approach was recommended.

The purpose of this project is to implement recommendation 25 of the Review and:

- a. identify the current number of scholarship opportunities available to nurses wishing to undertake postgraduate studies in specialty nursing areas and to make recommendations on the number of additional scholarships that may be required by specialty in order to meet identified workforce shortages.
- b. determine the cost and financial support available to participants undertaking re-entry programs, so as to provide advice on the need for loan scheme assistance

This project will be conducted in a number of phases. The first phase of this project will consist of an audit of postgraduate courses and scholarship funding available to division 1 nurses wishing to undertake such courses. 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 of the project will consist of 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 Ministers' Advisory Council.

<b>Taskforce Role</b>	Taskforce to implement	<b>Commencement of Work</b>	June 2004
<b>Key Milestones/Deliverables</b>			<b>Timeline</b>
Audit completed			Oct 2004
Report to Health, Education and Training Ministers			June 2005 (revised date)

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