

28 March 2011

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee

by e-mail : fpa.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a registered nurse, division 1, and I wish to tell you how difficult my life has been over the last nine months because of A.H.P.R.A.

I graduated as a nurse in Thailand and was registered as a division 2 nurse with the Victorian nursing board before the changes came into effect. The previous State system did a very good job and there were never any problems with them.

In June 2010 I graduated from the Australian Catholic University and became entitled to registration as a division 1 nurse. Registration was unduly delayed because A.H.P.R.A. at first did not undertake to honour the commitments made under the old system to graduate nurses : in particular, an English test was added to the requirements without consultation and was only removed after protests highlighting its retrospective operation. At this stage, no Ombudsman had been appointed for the scheme which further added to the unfairness. A scheme affecting so many people should not be brought into operation and excluded from the jurisdiction of the ordinary Ombudsman until there is an Ombudsman ready to operate in respect of the new system.

It then took an unconscionably long time for me to receive approval of my registration from A.H.P.R.A. owing to supposed errors in my documentation. The form was very complicated and required a witness holding a certain qualification, and if minor mistakes were made or some trivial piece of information not provided the whole process simply stopped without any notification to me. Therefore, nothing happened for long periods of time when I assumed that the application was being processed. These problems occurred even though I was already registered as a division 2 nurse under the old State system and was simply upgrading my qualifications, which should have been quite easy. These problems were not cleared up after numerous visits to their office - not until I

took a friend along who is a lawyer and who insisted that they should do it on the spot. I was then registered according to the on-line data base.

But not until the middle of this month did I receive the resulting registration certificate - which expired on 31 December 2010, almost three months before I got it! It bears an endorsement stating that it was printed on 2 March 2011 (although it expired over two months earlier) and also that I am not qualified to administer medicines. This is true only of my registration as a division 2 nurse. As a division 1 nurse I am so qualified and this endorsement is therefore incorrect in an important particular.

Towards the end of 2010, I was advised that my registration as a division 2 nurse was about to expire and it should be renewed on line. I was in England at the time on holidays and the on-line system did not work. So I e-mailed A.H.P.R.A. to let them know, but despite several attempts I did not receive an answer. This was very frustrating because it was difficult for me to contact anyone from such a distance. Even telephone calls were never answered.

For a long time it appeared that I had only one registration when in fact I should have two, as a division 1 and as a division 2 nurse. This caused me a significant degree of concern.

It is clear that the new system of registration was introduced with far too much haste and before proper testing of systems had occurred. However, this does not excuse the difficulties in simply contacting the organisation which further added to the stressful uncertainty and the impression of chaos.

I thank the Committee for its attention to this problem and to my letter.

Yours faithfully,

DECHAWUT BOONTUN