



The Secretary

Senate Community Affairs Committee

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Submission by ACNP to the Senate Inquiry into the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme

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The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners (ACNP) is the professional body for Nurse Practitioners (NPs) in Australia. As such, we have actively been providing a voice for NP's on local and federal government committees, with regulatory authorities and development of health care policy development for the benefit of the Australian community.

There are currently 532 authorised NPs in Australia, across 31 specialities. This number has potential to grow with a steady flow of NPs graduating from courses in all states. The assessment of these applications up until 1st July 2010 was handled by the local nursing board for that state or territory. Each state and territory of Australia had criteria by which they assessed the NP application. The NP's complied with these criteria and submitted their applications for assessment, with many members of the College providing expert opinions for the assessment panels that processed these applications.

From July 2010 the system for reviewing applications has not been made available for the assessment process to occur. Applications have sat for over eight months with no assessments occurring at many of the state/territory branches for the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). Nurses waiting for their applications to be processed so that they could gain endorsement and commence work as a NP were held up due to fact that no guidelines had been made available to the branches detailing how to process the applications. This had financial and professional ramifications for not only the NPs, but the Australian community who was not able to benefit from the timely care and reduced waitlist for specialist services that these NPs could have provided.

The ACNP had been part of the consultation process in the creation of the Guidelines for Endorsement as a Nurse Practitioner for over a year before the changeover to national registration was to commence in 1 July 2010. This process was not finalised until March this year. This has resulted in increasing frustration with regards to the lack of information being provided on the progress of applications. The lengthy delay has taken a heavy professional and personal toll on the NPs who have had to wait extended periods for the applications to be processed as they were unable to practice and function at the level they were qualified and experienced to perform.

What is required:

- Information is concise and accessible for all nurses who wish to apply for NP endorsement
- New registration standards set by the national board to be made available on the AHPRA website for NPs
- Adequate resources are made available to process the back log of Nurse Practitioner applications.

As always the ACNP is a willing and attentive supporter of any proceedings which apply to Nurse Practitioners that are transparent and professionally accountable.

We look forward to a positive and timely outcome.

Sincerely

Helen Gosby
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President ACNP