

Senate Finance And Public Administration Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



To Whom it may concern,

RE: Inquiry into Administration of health practitioner registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency ("AHPRA")

My name is [REDACTED], I am the brother in law to [REDACTED], who was a graduate from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Graduate entry Nursing degree June/July 2010.

I am writing to you regarding my experiences with dealing with AHPRA when I was assisting Sungmin regarding his nursing registration. I also wish to bring your attention to the fact that his and my experiences are not the exception but the norm.

One of the reasons why Sungmin chose to study at QUT in 2008 was because the Graduate entry (GE) nursing degree was to be completed in two years, and that due to it's completion in two (2) years the normally required English proficiency exam (IELTS or OET) was waived. My understanding of this condition was due the fact that a normally three (3) year degree being completed in two (2) years assumed that his level of English competency was at a high standard.

A few months before his graduation in June/July 2010, it was announced that the State nursing boards would be replaced by a national board, AHPRA. This was a time of uncertainty for all overseas students studying a GE nursing degree as they were not being told if they would have to sit an English proficiency exam or not, it either AHPRA hadn't announced to the students or it hadn't been announced properly.

When the decision was made it was the month Sungmin graduated, it was confirmed that regardless of the guidelines before, and irrespective of his completion of a two (2) year GE nursing degree, he had to sit the English proficiency exam. The only exception they gave was that graduating students who had to organise the English proficiency exam could submit a statutory declaration and apply for a restricted registration which allowed them to only work as a nurse under supervision until May 2011, by which time they had to have successfully attained an IELTS score of 7 across all disciplines.

Effectively Sungmin could not register as a nurse unless he paid for and sat the IELTS exam with all four (4) sections returning a result of seven (7) for each section as a minimum. To put this into perspective, you could score 8 for listening, 8 for reading, and 8 for speaking, but if you scored 6 for academic writing you would not meet criteria even though your average was 7.5. For the record I am a high achieving Pharmacy student at QUT and it would be difficult for me to score a 7 for academic writing.

However, I now address you to my concerns with the way AHPRA conducts itself. Despite it all, my brother in law submitted his application, by the due date. Admittedly, in error he failed to submit the statutory declaration requesting the restricted registration to give him until May 2011 to successfully obtain the necessary IELTS score.

Sungmin Jung received a letter about a week later stating that he was required submit an English

proficiency exam result by December 2010. Alarmed he tried to contact AHPRA regarding his situation and that he believed he had applied for a restricted registration. He was simply told that there was nothing he could do. After repeated attempts at discussion with AHPRA himself, he asked me to contact AHPRA which I did.

When I contacted AHPRA by phone I briefly discussed the reason I was calling, and was asked by the gentleman on the phone who's name was at the bottom of the letter. I advised it was [REDACTED], without any further discussion he transferred me through. When the line picked up I introduced myself to [REDACTED] who was polite. When I mentioned why I was calling, [REDACTED] cut me off and demanded in an agitated "who put you through to me?". I was unable to answer as I hadn't taken much notice of the person who transferred me.

[REDACTED] was then very direct, she stated that she couldn't discuss specific cases with me. I advised that I understood due to privacy laws. I tried to explain that my brother in law was a QUT nursing graduate and that he was an international student, at which point she cut me off stating "she didn't want to know who my brother in law was and that it didn't matter anyway". I was stunned with her rudeness, because at no point did she even attempt to be civil during the one sided discussion. I was told quite frankly that all the international students have "had years before their graduation to organise their English proficiency exam". I tried to explain that it wasn't the case for QUT GE Nursing graduates. I never even finished what I had wanted to say before she simply cut me off and stated that "there was nothing to be done, the decision had been made and that my brother in law had until December (2010) to get his English results or show he had the exam booked". She then terminated the call.

It was at this stage that we approached the Queensland Nurses' Union to help Sungmin. I eventually spoke to [REDACTED] [REDACTED], who advised me that Sungmin had failed to submit the Statutory declaration requesting the restricted registration. My response to this was that fair enough Sungmin had made a mistake. But in other areas such as Banking and Insurance, there are clear guidelines that a customer has 30 days to respond with the necessary information or request. It didn't seem fair that Sungmin having been made aware that something was wrong with his application was never given an opportunity to rectify it. Especially considering that we had tried address the situation directly within a week of receiving the first letter from AHPRA.

Eventually after months of effort (original application was sent in August 2010), Sungmin received a letter form AHPRA (8 November 2010) granting him the restricted registration.

I just wanted to end this statement by reiterating how disappointing this whole process has been. It should never have needed the Queensland Nurses' Union involvement. There should have been better processes in place to handle the situation internally. Companies have internal dispute resolution processes to ensure that a speedy resolution is achieved. I don't understand why it should be any different for a Government organisation.

If you feel the need to contact me regarding this statement, feel free to do so.

Yours truly

20 April 2011

[REDACTED]