



australian nursing federation

30 July 2010

Naomi Bleeser
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Ms Blesser

National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010

The Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) has reviewed the *National Health and Hospitals Network Bill 2010* and notes that this Bill provides for “the establishment of the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care as a permanent, independent statutory authority”.

With a membership of over 175,000 nurses and midwives the ANF is the largest industrial and professional organisation in Australia for nurses and midwives. Members are employed in a wide range of enterprises in urban, rural and remote locations in both the public and private health and aged care sectors.

Nurses and midwives form the largest component of the health workforce, and have a central concern for the health and well-being of all people in our society. As the union representing nurses and midwives, the ANF has a primary interest in the creation and maintenance of health and aged care environments which can provide for a high level of safety and quality of care that is mutually beneficial to the outcomes for recipients of care and to the health professionals delivering that care.

The ANF has been supportive of the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) and has contributed to the work of the Commission since its inception. The Federal Budget 2010/11 announcement of funding to perpetuate the Commission was therefore welcomed by the ANF, as is the introduction of the legislative framework to establish the Commission as a statutory authority.

The provision under this Bill for a new Performance and Accountability Framework which includes standards developed by the Commission, is supported by the ANF. It is noted at Clause 57 of the Bill that compliance with any standards and guidelines developed by the Commission is voluntary.

As a major contributor to the work of the Commission, the ANF is concerned that without an incentive or requirement in place, consistency in safety and quality of care for consumers of health and aged care services will not be achieved.

The ANF therefore supports a mechanism which would either provide an incentive - such as additional funding; or a requirement - such as those suggested in the Explanatory notes to the Bill

...compliance with those standards or guidelines may be made a term or condition of a grant or under a contract or other legally enforceable agreement. They may also be applied or adopted by a State or Territory law or a law of the Commonwealth.

National registration for health professionals was implemented in part to achieve greater consistency across the country in standards of care. It would seem that, unless there is a mechanism to enforce the clinical standards produced by the Commission, as nationally consistent standards, the push for improvement to safety and quality of care will be compromised.

Yours sincerely,

Lee Thomas
Federal Secretary

The industrial and professional organisation for nurses and midwives in Australia

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