



The College of Nursing creating nursing's future

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Submission No. 028

(Dementia)

Date: 01/05/2012

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1 May, 2012

Dr Alison Clegg
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
PO Box 6021, Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

haa.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Dr Clegg,

The College of Nursing welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into Dementia: Early Diagnosis and Intervention.

In our submission, we have identified that, while it has been prepared from the perspective of The College of Nursing, as from the first week of July 2012 we will be *unifying* with the Royal College of Nursing. A new legal entity, the Australian College of Nursing Limited (ACN) has been incorporated and as from the Unification Date ACN will assume control of both organisations.

We see that our comments in this submission would be strongly supported by the new organisation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on 0297457512 if you require any additional information. We look forward to continued involvement in the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Tracey Osmond
Chief Executive



The College of Nursing creating nursing's future

SUBMISSION

to

**The Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
The House of Representatives**

Parliament of Australia

Inquiry into Dementia: Early Diagnosis and Intervention

by

**The College of Nursing
Burwood NSW 2134**

1 May, 2012

INTRODUCTION

The Parliament of Australia House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health and Ageing's call for submissions into the early diagnosis and intervention practices relating to Dementia in Australia is framed around four Terms of Reference (TOR).

The Standing Committee has requested that submissions to the inquiry provide a particular focus on how early diagnosis and intervention can:

1. Improve quality of life and assist people with dementia to remain independent for as long as possible;
2. Increase opportunities for continued social engagement and community participation for people with dementia;
3. Help people with dementia and their carers plan for their futures including organising financial and legal affairs and preparing for longer-term or more intensive care requirements; and,
4. How best to deliver awareness and communication on dementia and dementia-related services into the community.

DISCUSSION

TOR 1: *Improve quality of life and assist people with dementia to remain independent for as long as possible.*

From an educational perspective, improving the quality of life and assisting people to remain independent for as long as possible can be achieved as part of a Commonwealth multi-faceted plan, through ongoing education of nursing professionals nationally. As of March 2012, the Registered Nurse component of the Australian health professional workforce numbered 332,185.¹ Nurses are the only health professional group throughout Australia who have 7/24 ongoing contact with people who have, or who care for people with, dementia.

Registered and Enrolled Nurses are always available to provide:

- information to carers and family members,
- assistance with contacts and referrals to other health and social support professionals,
- guidance with environmental and personal care planning, and
- assistance with physical support to maintain independence for as long as possible.

¹ Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (March, 2012) News for Nurses and Midwives. Issue 1. p.1.

Thus, Federal government sponsored Post Graduate studies for Registered and Enrolled Nurses in early diagnosis and intervention of dementia would greatly increase the national professional skill-base throughout the Australian community.

For broad acceptance, these courses would include education that can be completed within a day, a few days, a few weeks or a few months, and need to be offered several ways including distance mode, internet-based and face-to-face workshop format.

At this time, The College of Nursing (TCoN) is an ideally placed national entity to design and deliver a suite of dementia education modules across Australia. Our remit is to design and provide nursing education using all available resources for nurses across Australia. We have in place an established program in Aged Care Nursing that would provide an excellent pathway to support a Federal initiative for raising health professional knowledge and skill toward improving quality of life and maintenance of independence for our dementia population.

Recognising the future needs of our dementia population, during 2011, TCoN commenced liaison with Bradford University Dementia Studies Faculty and met at length with Professor Clair Surr during her visit to Sydney that year. The College agreed in principle to commence development of a new Graduate Certificate in Dementia Care Nursing that would articulate into the Bradford University Master of Dementia Studies course. Commonwealth support for this initiative would be welcomed now, as it would progress the course development. This would support the Inquiry toward improving quality of life and assisting people with dementia to remain independent for as long as possible, and provide measurable outcomes toward supporting Australia's growing dementia population.

More recently, a College staff member contributed to the identification and development of a specialist skill set to be recommended for Australian Registered Nurses working with people who have dementia. This initiative was work-shopped in December 2011, led by Professor Richard Fleming, Director of the NSW/ACT Dementia Training Study Centre.

TOR 2. *Increase opportunities for continued social engagement and community participation for people with dementia.*

TOR 3. *Help people with dementia and their carers plan for their futures including organising financial and legal affairs and preparing for longer-term or more intensive care requirements.*

TCoN strongly supports the increase of opportunities and would be willing to participate in appropriate educational strategies.

The Curriculum for the College's Post Graduate dementia education courses could be broadened to include ways of helping people plan for their future with a partner, spouse or family member who has dementia.

Comments on financial and legal affairs best remain with registered financial planners and lawyers. However, these professionals could seek advice from Registered Nurses with appropriate expertise on emerging healthcare requirements for persons with Dementia.

There are few independent aged care advocates as most advocates are employed by government funded offices or private law firms. Australia has several Nurse Practitioners who work within the dementia field, but they have a distinct specialist role. RN Dementia Advocates could be plentiful around Australia if the required training was made affordable and accessible. With appropriate Federal funding, the College could design and offer an RN Dementia Advocate course at Post Graduate level.

TOR 4: How best to deliver awareness and communication on dementia and dementia-related services into the community.

Information and communication on dementia and related services can be facilitated for the Commonwealth Government by TCoN through the College's published quarterly magazine, through printed government information brochures provided at College dementia workshops held within various communities around Australia, and by providing every Registered Nurse and Enrolled Nurse in our membership database with dementia information updates the government wishes to provide.

CONCLUSION

The College would welcome the opportunity to be further involved as appropriate in this very important Inquiry. While the College's submission has been prepared from the perspective of The College of Nursing, as from the first week of July 2012 we will be Unifying with the Royal College of Nursing, *Australia*.

A new legal entity, the Australian College of Nursing Limited (ACN) has been incorporated and as from the Unification Date ACN will assume control of both organisations.

ACNs vision is to provide a single, focused professional voice for the nursing profession within Australia. The primary objectives are to leverage the capabilities, size and scale of the two Colleges to:

- offer value for money for all members,
- grow educational services nationally,
- have a greater influence in health and policy debate; and
- establish an economically sustainable, unified College which will enable investment to support future growth.

We see that our comments in this submission would be strongly supported by the new organisation.
