



Australian Nursing Federation

ACT Branch

ABN: 41 698 088 660

President: A Rosborough Secretary: J Miragaya

Mr Andrew Barr
Treasurer
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

12 January 2012

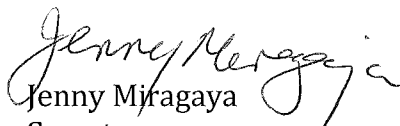
Dear Treasurer

Re: 2012-2013 Budget Consultation Process

Thank you for your undated letter received by the ACT ANF on 9 January 2012. The ACT ANF submitted its budget submission to your office on 16 December 2011. However, the ACT ANF will ensure that its submission is also submitted to the email address indicated in your letter.

The ACT ANF again thanks you for the opportunity to provide input into the budget process and is more than willing to participate in any further discussions related to the budget preparation.

Yours sincerely


Jenny Miragaya
Secretary



Australian Nursing Federation

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ABN: 41 698 088 660

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Mr Andrew Barr
Treasurer
GPO Box 1020
Canberra ACT 2601

16 December 2011

Dear Mr Barr

Re: Budget Preparation

I write on behalf of the ACT ANF and its members in respect of the framing of the 2012-13 Budget. The ACT ANF provides the following views and suggestions for future priorities and savings **on a without prejudice basis**. They are provided as possibilities for investigation by the Government and further discussion.

As the ACT ANF represents a large majority of Nurses, Midwives and Assistants in Nursing currently working in the ACT, and as a result of both Federal and ACT Government-specific changes to the funding and provision of health care within in the ACT, the ACT ANF considers that it is well placed to comment on the challenges, particularly budgetary challenges, facing the ACT and the delivery of health care services into the future.

This is particularly so, given the fact that the ACT Government is in the process of integrating a significant period of change in relation to the provision of health services within the ACT, specifically in respect of the ACT Capital Infrastructure Plan and the consequent changes to service provision and models of care; as well as in response to Federal Government initiatives in respect of National Health and Hospital Reform, the introduction of an ACT Local Hospital Network and the establishment of Primary Healthcare Organisations. The ACT population is predicted to increase by over 25% between 2006 and 2026¹ with the proportion of ACT residents aged over 65 years predicted to increase by 181% between 2006 and 2026.²

Out of a total ACT Public Sector workforce of 17,702.19 FTE employees (at June 2010), the ACT Health Directorate represented 4,887.23 FTE employees³ or 27.5% of this workforce⁴ and Calvary Public Hospital represented 817.04 FTE employees⁵ or 5.1% of

¹ Canberra Quick Stats 2009-2010, ACT Chief Minister's Department, www.cmd.act.gov.au

² Canberra Quick Stats 2009-2010, ACT Chief Minister's Department, www.cmd.act.gov.au

³ Commissioner for Public Administration ACT Public Service Workforce Profile 2009-2010 *State of the Service*, page 12, www.cmd.act.gov.au

⁴ Ibid p10

⁵ Ibid p12

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this workforce.⁶ The ACT Health Directorate nursing and midwifery workforce was reported as comprising 1945.88 FTE as at February 2011.⁷ Verifiable figures for the Calvary Public Hospital nursing and midwifery workforce were last reported to the ACT Public Sector Nursing and Midwifery Agency Consultative Committee in April 2010, and indicated that the nursing and midwifery workforce consisted of 494.27 FTE employees.⁸ Therefore, as nurses and midwives comprise greater than 42% of the ACT Public Sector Health workforce, it is appropriate that the ACT ANF provide input during this consultation process. Therefore, as the nursing and midwifery workforce has a considerable impost on the ACT budget, the ACT ANF will highlight budget priorities from a nursing and midwifery perspective.

New Graduate Positions

The ACT ANF seeks additional funding to be allocated specifically for additional New Graduate Nursing/Transition to Practice positions and the support infrastructure to support their integration into the workforce.

The ability to provide, at a local level, appropriate and well supervised clinical placements has been recognised not just in the ACT, but nationally through Health Workforce Australia⁹ as a significant factor in attracting and retaining a viable Nursing and Midwifery workforce.

A significant disincentive to consider Nursing and Midwifery as a viable career option was the 2011 decision of the ACT Health Directorate to only offer part time employment to new graduates seeking employment with the Health Directorate. Undergraduate nursing students are subject to similar financial imposts as other students, incur Higher Education Contribution debts and, like other graduates, look forward to commencing employment on salaries and conditions commensurate with other new graduates. In limiting their ability to access full time employment, the ACT Health Directorate, while seeking to employ a greater number of newly graduated nurses, discriminated against nursing graduates seeking permanent full time employment within the Territory.

The ACT ANF therefore requests that all New Graduates be offered full-time employment to make these positions tenable, and part time employment only on request. The ACT ANF considers that this request be given full consideration with regards to future workforce planning. The current makeup of the Nursing and Midwifery workforce is disproportionately composed of the 'baby-boomer' generation. This section of the workforce is likely to retire at a time when the demands on the health system are expected to become the greatest. The ACT Government will require a

⁶ Ibid p10

⁷ ACT Health Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Report, February 2001, tabled ACT PS Nursing and Midwifery ACC 25 May 2011, N&MO@act.gov.au

⁸ ACT Health Nursing and Midwifery Report April 2010, tabled at the ACT PS Nursing and Midwifery ACC 22 June 2010

⁹Health Workforce Australia (2011) *National Health Workforce Innovation and Reform Strategic Framework for Action*, National Consultation Background Paper



substantial cohort of younger and well educated staff to replace the large proportion of staff who will retire to ensure that staffing levels are able to match the increasing demand. Federal and State/Territory government initiatives to encourage consideration of a career in Nursing and Midwifery are futile unless these initiatives are complimented with guaranteed employment within the Nursing and Midwifery professions. The 'skills shortage' has demonstrated the problems a lack of forward workforce planning can create, and is particularly prevalent in an area such as Nursing and Midwifery, where professionals require years of training prior to registering to practice. Without this forward planning the current health model will be unsustainable and the ability to deliver quality care will be diminished.

Mental Health

The ACT ANF is seeking additional funding for Mental Health services generally, hostel accommodation for consumers with high needs, additional funding for Non-Government Organisations who provide Mental Health services within the community and targeted funding to facilitate the training of an increased number of specialist Mental Health Nurses.

The ACT ANF considers that there is a need for a review of the current expenditure within ACT Mental Health. Demand for Mental Health services in the ACT reflect the growing demand for similar services throughout Australia, as recognised by the Federal Government in its \$1.5 billion boost to Mental Health funding in the May 2011 budget. Similarly, the ACT Government, in recognising this growth in demand, committed to increasing Mental Health funding to 12% of the Health budget by 2012.¹⁰ Such a commitment is welcomed by the ACT ANF, particularly given the impact of the ACT Capital Infrastructure Plan and the consequent changes to service provision and Models of Care associated with an expansion in Mental Health services. However, as these services expand, the ACT ANF considers that there needs to be a concomitant increase in both the number of staff available and the available skill base.

Enterprise Bargaining

Although bargaining for a new Public Sector Nursing and Midwifery Agreement may commence in 2012, the budget allocation to meet the exigencies of the replacement Agreement will fall more heavily in 2013. However, the ACT ANF demands that Treasury allocate additional funding in anticipation of the log of claims to be presented by the ACT ANF on behalf of members in 2012. Serious consideration must be given to a budget allocation to meet the high expectations of such a productive and highly skilled workforce whose expectations have been sorely tested in the last two rounds of enterprise bargaining. Additional consideration must be given in respect of the inequitable application of the employer contribution to superannuation, dependent on the commencement dates of employees' employment.

¹⁰ ACT Health Services Plan 2009-2013 available at:
<http://health.act.gov.au/c/health?a=dlpubpoldoc&document=1636>



Further, the ACT ANF considers that with the reforms proposed Federally,¹¹ and their likely impact on the provision of health services within the ACT, particularly in terms of Primary Health Care and the establishment of a Local Hospital Network,¹² and the increases in demand forecast by Health Workforce Australia,¹³ it is likely that there will be a need to increase the existing Nursing and Midwifery workforce to meet this foreseeable increase in workload. It would therefore seem prudent that sufficient budgetary allocation is made to reflect this increase in health care service and workforce demand and to meet the existing pay and conditions requirements of the current Collective Agreement.

Such consideration needs to reflect the changes in the Models of Care adopted for these new services, such as the Continuity of Care model proposed for midwifery services, the Recovery focus associated with Mental Health Care and the provision of nurse-led Models of Care such as within the current Walk in Centre and the proposed expansion of this model. In determining a remuneration budget, calculations need to reflect the skills and experience of the workforce required and not be based solely on the beginning practitioner. In addition, in securing a permanent skilled nursing workforce, the additional costs associated with the use of casual, agency and short term temporary contracts can be avoided while at the same time ensuring a workforce that is familiar with the applicable workplace policies and procedures, and committed to the values of the ACT Health Directorate.

The ACT ANF therefore considers that there needs to be a positive commitment to establishing a permanent ACT-based health workforce. The ACT ANF suggests the adoption of a budgetary policy which actively discourages the use of “fly-in/fly-out” employment arrangements and the utilisation of expensive short term contracts, with their associated cost implications related to the provision of accommodation, travel and living away from home allowances.

In addition to the implementation of alternative Models of Care, and the establishment of positive employment policies, the ACT ANF considers that the adoption of appropriate new technology must be facilitated. This will require a sufficient budgetary allocation to support the introduction of technology, inclusive of sufficient resources to support staff training required by its introduction.

¹¹ National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (2009) *A Healthier Future for All Australians - Final Report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission*, P3 - 5499. Available at: [http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/F9985BD254EC75F5CA2575FB0025888A/\\$File/FinalReportof%20thenhhrcJune2009.pdf](http://www.yourhealth.gov.au/internet/yourhealth/publishing.nsf/Content/F9985BD254EC75F5CA2575FB0025888A/$File/FinalReportof%20thenhhrcJune2009.pdf)

¹² “A Local Hospital Network for the Australian Capital Territory – The way forward” available at: www.health.act.gov.au/lhn

¹³ Health Workforce Australia (2011) *National Health Workforce Innovation and Reform Strategic Framework for Action*, National Consultation Background Paper



Review of Payroll Systems

The ACT ANF reiterates its previous budgetary submission for a review of Shared Services. The ACT ANF continues to be concerned about the ability of Shared Services to deliver the payroll functions of the ACT Health Directorate, while appreciating the commitments made in an effort to improve the quality of the services provided by Shared Services.

The ACT ANF remains concerned that Shared Services is currently unable to deliver some of the basic functions required of a payroll department. The ongoing issues associated with annual leave, personal leave and long service leave accrual remain outstanding and is indicative of serious record-keeping failures which may breach *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)* record-keeping requirements.

The ACT ANF will continue to work with Shared Services directly with suggested amendments to the current payslip format, which would significantly reduce the incidence of over/under payment related issues and increase clarity in record-keeping.

These include:

- Hours worked towards standard salary in a fortnight in addition to “salaries” followed by an annual and fortnightly pay figure;
- Provide the date of accrual for shifts paid at a penalty rate for each shift worked;
- Where a staff member receives Higher Grade Duties (HGD) Allowance the period for which they are paid HGD Allowance should be shown including start and end dates and any break in HGD;
- The expected total leave balance for the year at 4, 5, 6 or 7 weeks accrual rates;
- A separate figure for leave hours accrued during each pay fortnight; and
- LSL balance and accrual on the pay slip.

In addition, the ACT ANF welcomes the current review of the payroll software systems employed by Shared Services, which would appear to be consistent with the Auditor-General’s 2008 report into the Chris21 system.¹⁴

Construction of a New Public Sub Acute Facility

The ACT ANF is supportive of the construction of a new public sub acute facility to meet the needs of Canberra’s growing population. As such, the ACT ANF would support funding to progress this issue. The ACT ANF looks forward to further involvement in the process of community consultation regarding this proposal.

¹⁴ ACT Auditor-General’s Office Performance Audit Report “Chris21 Human Resource Management System: Procurement and Implementation” May 2008



Registered Training Organisation Opportunities

As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), the ACT Health Directorate has the opportunity to take advantage of its knowledge capital and have a greater impact on the supply of health workers. The ACT ANF considers that the ACT Government should consider opportunities for the ACT Health Directorate, as an RTO, to collaborate with local secondary colleges and the Vocational Training sector to provide a health worker education/training pathway. Pathways may be at the Certificate or Diploma level and result in fast tracking job-ready participants into the workplace upon the completion of secondary or vocational studies. It is envisaged that this would reduce the reliance on agency/contract staff and form part of a workforce recruitment/retention solution to develop a source of Nurses and Midwives to service the growing needs of the ACT in an environment of an ageing Nursing and Midwifery workforce.

There would be additional benefits of promoting the ACT Health Directorate as a preferred employer by developing an education career pathway for the Nursing and Midwifery workforce within the ACT healthcare sector, specifically in the area of adult learning and education.

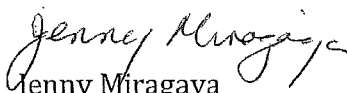
Opportunities for cost-recovery may also be evident with further investigation. For example, short-course training programs (available via *Capabiliti*) might be developed in line with nationally recognised standards and be made available to individuals and other health institutions on a cost-recovery basis.

This is particularly relevant given the requirements of National Registration and Regulation, applicable not only to Nurses and Midwives, but also to other health professionals, and the increasing need to verify professional competence and a commitment to life-long learning. The ACT ANF considers that the ACT Health Directorate, as a Registered Training Organisation through the Staff Development Unit at TCH, has considerable scope to not only offer appropriate cost-recovery courses to ACT Health Directorate employees, but also offer courses on a more commercial footing to other health professionals. The ACT ANF strongly recommends that these potential opportunities be further investigated.

Conclusion

The ACT ANF thanks the ACT Government for the opportunity to provide the above suggestions and recommendations and is willing to participate further in discussions related to budget preparations.

Yours sincerely


Jenny Miragaya
Branch Secretary

Cc: Katy Gallagher