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**Submission to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
Re: Consultation paper on registration standards**

I am an international student currently pursuing my Bachelors of Nursing at a university in Victoria, and due to complete my degree in November 2010. I am concerned about the board's English language requirements for international students and would like to comment on that.

Currently, all state nursing and midwifery boards (with exception of South Australia & Western Australia) DO NOT require proof of English proficiency from international students IF they have completed an approved nursing course in Australia. This seems logical as most universities across Australia have a minimum admission requirement of 6.5 bands in IELTS (Academic) for nursing and/or midwifery course. If a student has successfully completed an approved nursing course (including the clinical component), it should be safe to conclude that his/her language skills are acceptable to provide safe nursing care. Moreover, if the student has lived and studied in Australia for 3 years, the language skills would improve.

If the board is concerned about the language skills of international students, the board should consider setting a standard for education providers that raises the current admission requirement of IELTS 6.5 to IELTS 7.

Most international students can only stay for a few weeks after completion of their course as their student visa expires soon after. If a student wishes to extend his/her stay, the process of applying for temporary / permanent residency takes a long time (for example, the current time-frame to obtain a skills assessment from ANMC is 12-14 weeks!!). Even for the English tests (like IELTS and OET), the next available date is always 2-3 months away. In my opinion, the board's mandatory English language requirement is an unnecessary burden, and will make it very difficult for international students to register with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, apply for skills assessment, and apply for temporary / permanent residency before their visa expires.

The comments I would like to make are:

- The English language requirements should NOT apply to International students if they have completed a course in Australia, approved by the board
-OR-
if they have previously been enrolled as a nurse in Australia.
- OET should be accepted as a test for English language for internationally qualified nurses.

