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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982 (Cth)

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia

Media Release

Board protects public and supports safe practice

13 August 2010

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (the National Board) has agreed on transitional arrangements for international students to meet the national English language skills registration standard, while ensuring the public is protected.

The arrangements vary for different categories of students, as follows:

- The National Board will honour the commitments made by a Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authority (NMRA) to internationally qualified nurses or midwives who were assessed before 1 July 2010 and directed to undertake a Board or NMRA approved program before registration. These nurses and midwives will be granted full registration immediately, subject to appropriate proof of documentation

- Nurses and midwives who were assessed before 1 July 2010 and were not given an undertaking by a NMRA will need to meet the National Board's English language skills registration standard before they are registered to practise

- International students completing their first qualification as a nurse or midwife (entry to practice programs) whose student visas are due to expire on or before 30 August 2010 will be granted full registration with the following conditions:
    - that the nurse or midwife provides evidence that they have met the English language skills registration standard (IELTS academic level 7 or equivalent) **before** 31 May 2011 (renewal date)
    - until the nurse or midwife is able to meet this requirement above then the following conditions will also apply:
        - that the nurse or midwife practises under the direct or indirect supervision of a registered nurse or midwife
        - that the nurse or midwife advises their employer of the condition imposed on their registration requiring them to meet the English language skills registration standard by 31 May 2011
        - that the nurse or midwife provides to AHPRA with the name and contact details of their employer
        - that the nurse or midwife authorises their employer to notify the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) if the employer holds any concerns about their English language competence

- If the nurse or midwife is unable to meet these requirements, then their registration will not be renewed. They will be entitled to renew their registration when they can provide evidence of reaching the required standard

- nurses and midwives who meet the Board's English language skills registration standard will be registered to practise.

AHPRA Media: 03 8708 9200

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The National Board did not extend the transition arrangements to nursing and midwifery students who are studying currently and who expect to complete their course by the end of 2010.

The Board believes students completing their course at the end of the 2010 academic year will have had enough time before the end of the year to meet the English language skills registration standard.

The Board set this standard to ensure all nurses and midwives in Australia can provide safe care to the Australian community and can communicate effectively – orally and in writing – with their patients and clients, and with other health professionals.

This standard is consistent with the English language skills requirements for registration in the United Kingdom and is the lowest minimum standard for English language across all the health professions in Australia.

In July 2009, all NMRAs endorsed the standard of IELTS academic level 7. The National Board consulted extensively on its proposed English language skills standard in October 2009 before it came into effect on 1 July 2010.

The standard has been published on the National Board website for many months. The Board has communicated its expectations widely to the university and higher education sectors and believes it should come as no surprise to anyone preparing students for entry to the professions that this standard now applies.

The National Board is committed to providing accurate and consistent information about its registration standards.

The Board intends to review its English language registration standard to ensure clarity and that all education providers and students understand the requirements of the standard. The requirement for IELTS academic level 7 or equivalent will not be reviewed.

The Board reminds all nursing and midwifery education providers of the Board's requirements for registration and encourages them to support currently enrolled students to meet the standard.

The Board will be working with governments and employers to advise them of the conditions on registration to be imposed on some nurses registration, to ensure the public is protected and that individual nurses practising with these conditions are appropriately supported to meet the Board's English language skills registration standard by 31 May 2011.

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