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Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia

FIRST MEETING OF THE NURSING AND MIDWIFERY BOARD OF AUSTRALIA, 20 SEPTEMBER 2009

The first meeting of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia was held on 20 September 2009 at the Aitken Hill conference and events venue near Melbourne. The Board is established under the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008*. Appointments under this Act were announced by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 31 August 2009.

The twelve members of the Board are Ms Anne Copeland (Chair), Ms Gillie Anderson, Ms Angela Brannelly, Professor Mary Chiarella, Dr Lynette Cusack, Professor Denise Fassett, Mrs Lynne Geri, Ms Louise Horgan, Ms Mary Kirk, Dr Christine Murphy, Ms Heather Sjoberg and Ms Margaret Winn.

Ahead of their Sunday meeting, members of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia met with members of the other nine boards for a full-day induction program on Saturday, 19 September. The Honourable Daniel Andrews MP, Minister for Health, Victoria, spoke to the induction program on behalf of all Ministers on the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council.

The members of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia acknowledged the responsibility that had been given to them by the Ministerial Council. They committed themselves to doing everything they could to build a world-class system of health practitioner regulation for the protection of the Australia community and for their profession.

The Board agreed that a key part of its work program will be consultation with the community, the profession and the existing State and Territory boards on matters on which they or the Ministerial Council must make decisions. The Board agreed that it needed the wisdom and experience of many people outside the Board to do its job effectively.

The Board also noted the importance of communication with the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council and government authorities, professional bodies, consumer groups, the other nine national boards, health complaints entities in the States and Territories and tribunals in each State and Territory.

The Board agreed that it was desirable for there to be an independent accrediting body for training providers and programs of training for the nursing and midwifery profession. The Board further considered that it would be desirable if proposals from the sector went forward to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council by the end of November 2009. The Board further agreed that in the first instance it would wish any independent accrediting body to undertake functions in relation to accreditation standards and the accrediting of providers and programs.

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The Board noted that the Chairs of all the national boards had issued a statement on 17 September providing early advice of a consultation process in late October and November around registration and related matters. Consultation papers would be posted on the Board's website.

The main focus of the Board's first meeting was discussion of the proposals that would be the subject of this consultation. The Board agreed to have a further three meetings before Christmas 2009. Following the consultation period, the Board will finalise its position on registration proposals. At its December meeting the Board will complete this work in order to provide the proposals to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council for decision.

The Board acknowledged the tight timetable for completion of the initial part of its work. The timetable was necessary so that all registrants could have advice ahead of the commencement day on 1 July 2010 of the new registration standards and requirements.

In order to meet the demands of the timeframe, the Board determined to establish four working groups of the Board. These groups will be responsible for advising on finance and governance, accreditation, registration, and policy and standards.

At its first meeting, the Board agreed to prepare for consultation in late October proposals on the following matters:

- the five mandatory registration standards, namely standards on requirements for professional indemnity insurance, matters about the criminal history of applicants for registration, requirements for continuing professional development, requirements for English language skills and requirements in relation to previous practice,
- any endorsements required, and
- draft standards for the accreditation of nursing and midwifery training providers and programs.

The Board also considered detailed proposals for how individual registrants will transition from their current registration to the new registration categories set out in the proposed National Law. The Board commissioned further work on this with a view to being able to settle those matters which did not require Ministerial Council consideration at its next meeting.

The Board considered a number of administrative and financial matters. The Board was mindful of the need to ensure the scheme ran efficiently for registrants. In light of this, the Board agreed to commence work to develop a target budget for 2010-11 which was based on the existing fee revenue available to current boards increased by a factor to reflect increases in the cost of living.

Further work was required on whether such a budget was practical and how it would translate into fees for registrants. The Board noted the current differences between fees in different States and Territories and also the effect of removal of fees for practitioners currently registered in more than one jurisdiction.

The Board agreed to work through a number of matters over the next two meetings in order to try to reach agreement on the services it required, the total budget and the fees to be charged to registrants for inclusion in its Health Profession Agreement with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

At this meeting, the Board considered options for structuring State and Territory boards. The board decided to have a State and Territory Board in every jurisdiction.

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The Board also considered remuneration for State and Territory Board members and agreed that these should be set at $406 a sitting day for Chairs and $334 a sitting day for members. These costs are to be reflected in the Board's budget.

The Board agreed that it was desirable for all registrants in a particular profession to be registered on a standard timetable nationally. The Board agreed that the renewal date for nursing and midwifery registrants would be 31 May each year. The Board noted that practitioners whose registration at 1 July 2010 finished on a different date would transition over the next registration cycle to the new date.

In terms of business procedures, the Board agreed to a detailed procedure relating to the requirement in legislation for declarations of Conflict of Interest at the commencement of each meeting, meeting procedures and speaking on behalf of the Board. The Board also agreed to its logo as shown at the head of this statement, and noted that its website to be set up in the near future would have the domain name www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au.

The Board acknowledged the very considerable amount of support which had been given for its first meeting. It acknowledged the work done by existing State and Territory boards, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Australian Peak Nursing and Midwifery Forum, AHPRA and the National Registration and Accreditation Implementation Project team and looked forward to working with these groups in the next stages of its work.

Ms Anne Copeland
Chair, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia

21 September 2009