



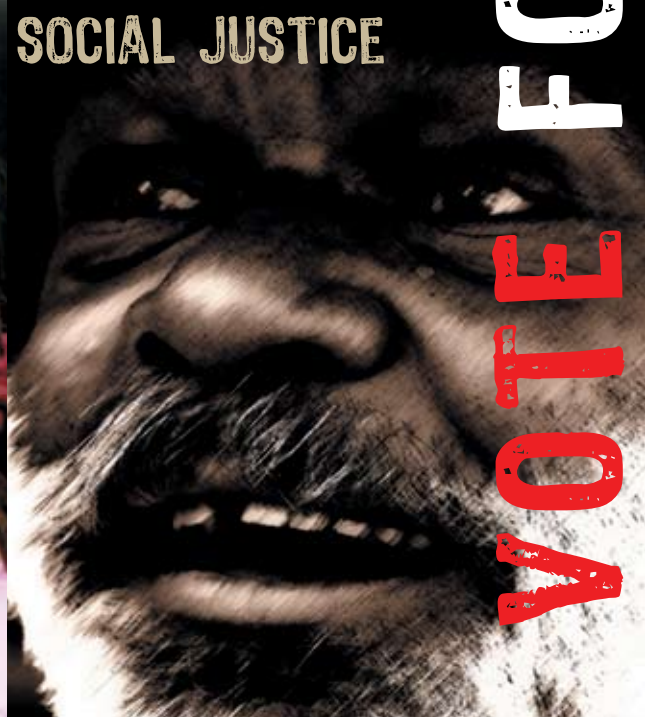
HEALTH



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS



AGED CARE



SOCIAL JUSTICE

VOTE FOR



OH&S



WORKFORCE

NURSES

## Nurses vote for... practical and effective efforts to deal with the increasing pressure felt within the Australian nursing... **WORKFORCE**

Australia's nurses want to provide a nursing workforce that is adequately skilled to meet the pressure created by increasing workloads and more complex care.

The Australian community wants a nursing workforce that is sufficient in number to meet their need for nursing care considering the impending retirement of nearly 40% of the nursing workforce over the next ten to fifteen years.

As a result of the failure to deal adequately with the nursing workforce at a national level we currently have:

- a critical skills shortage in all areas of nursing;
- increasing workloads for nurses and an ageing population who are sicker and need more complex nursing care;
- insufficient university and TAFE places to ensure a sufficient nursing workforce into the future; and
- the exploitation of nurses educated overseas coming to Australia on temporary 457 and 442 visas who are unable to obtain registration as a nurse in Australia.

Nurses know health; they understand the complexities of health and the need for a robust workforce to deliver quality health care to the Australian community. Nurses cannot continue to provide quality nursing care under current workforce pressures.

As Australia faces its next federal election, nurses are calling for:

- a national workforce strategy linking educational places to workforce supply and demand;
- an additional 1,000 fully financed undergraduate nursing places each year across Australia from 2008;
- an increase in federal funding for clinical and placement costs for undergraduate nursing education to make nursing a more attractive option for universities;
- funding for enrolled nurses to upgrade their qualifications from Certificate IV to Diploma;
- federal funding to ensure paid re entry and refresher education for registered and enrolled nurses; and
- the establishment of a nursing policy directorate at a national level with a chief nurse or principal nurse adviser.



“Our patients are older. They’re going through surgery they wouldn’t have survived ten years ago and they’ve got all the complexities of being frail aged as well.”

“It’s horrendous; we just don’t have time to sit with people and care for them properly – this is affecting the outcome of their care.”

# Nurses vote for... human rights for all people, regardless of nationality or economic means... **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

All people deserve equitable access to the basic human rights of health care based on need, adequate housing, freedom from persecution and discrimination, a clean environment, and secure and safe employment.

Australia's nurses want a national government that establishes fair and honest social and environmental policies; extending the hand of justice to all peoples.

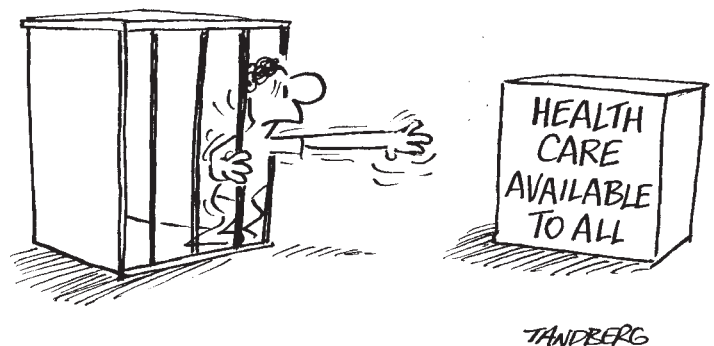
As a result of ineffective, reactive and punitive social justice policies at a national level we currently have:

- an appalling health record for Australia's Indigenous population with Indigenous Australians dying, on average, 18 years earlier than non-Indigenous Australians;
- a lack of appropriate employment opportunities for those who are returning to work from welfare; including poor pay and conditions and inappropriate job allocation and retraining;
- unacceptably long and arduous detention of people seeking refugee status in Australia;
- temporary protection visas allocated to people given refugee status continuing their uncertainty and isolation; and
- an inadequate response to the environmental effects of climate change.

As Australia faces its next federal election, nurses want a commitment to closing the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians; a humane policy for people seeking refuge in Australia; and an effective strategy to deal with climate change, and are calling for:

- implementation of the HREOC\* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner's recommendations to achieve health equality for Indigenous people within a generation;
- an end to the abuse of people seeking asylum in Australia as a result of off shore and indefinite detention and the use of temporary protection visas;
- a fairer 'welfare to work' system that gives people choices and takes account of their circumstances and skills; and
- a commitment to addressing environmental issues including the ratification of the Kyoto protocol.

\*Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission



“We work for the rights of people to access health care, no matter who they are – the government should do the same.”

“Life for Indigenous Australians must be a nightmare; how can our government accept that Indigenous Australians die 18 years before non-Indigenous Australians!”

## Nurses vote for... decent and fair health, safety, compensation and rehabilitation practices within Australian workplaces... **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Workers in Australia are entitled to healthy and safe workplaces with a compensation and rehabilitation system that ensures no worker will be disadvantaged if they are injured at work.

Australia's nurses should be protected from injury and if injured, they should be cared for in the same manner they care for others made vulnerable by ill health.

Currently, at a national level:

- nurses rate as the profession with the highest exposure to workplace violence;
- there is a continually high incidence of back injury in nursing, especially in aged care where no lift policies remain non-compulsory;
- large employers being encouraged to move to the national occupational health and safety and workers' compensation scheme – COMCARE, leaving many workers with decreased benefits and a loss of their basic rights;
- some workers missing out on occupational health and safety cover altogether; and
- a reduction in workers' access to union support and advice.

Nurses know health; they understand the complexities of health and the need for a strong and accountable occupational health and safety system for all workers in Australia.

As Australia faces its next federal election, nurses want a commitment to benchmarks for occupational health and safety and workers' compensation and are calling for:

- OHS legislation in each jurisdiction that is compatible and developed under the following four principles:
  - a) a tripartite approach,
  - b) effective enforcement,
  - c) adequately resourced inspectorates and authorities, and
  - d) no reduction of existing protections with continuous improvements;
- an end to the current strategy of inviting companies into the national workers' compensation scheme;
- a commitment to funding a national 'no lift' strategy in the health, aged and community sectors; and
- funding for a national strategy to combat the rising and dangerous incidents of violence and aggression toward nurses and other health care workers.

"I get nervous coming to work for a shift in the emergency department; people are so aggressive when they have to wait and there is no real protection for nurses – a friend was hit on her shift."

"At the end of the day my back aches; I don't know how much longer I can keep working with the residents; we have nothing to help us lift them or move them about."

# Nurses vote for... fair pay and working conditions and adequate workplace protection for all Australia's workers... **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

Every worker in Australia should have the right to choose union representation to assist them in achieving fair pay and working conditions.

Every worker in Australia should have protection from unfair dismissal and the right to an impartial umpire to resolve workplace disputes.

As a result of the Howard Government's introduction of WorkChoices we have working conditions in Australia that are harsh and unfair with:

- award conditions stripped back to an inadequate five minimum conditions;
- the removal of protection from unfair dismissal for millions of workers;
- no right to a collective agreement if the employer does not agree;
- workers being forced onto 'AWAs' that undercut take home pay and employment conditions;
- minimum wages set to become lower in real terms over time;
- the removal of the national industrial relations tribunal;
- employers able to cut penalty rates, overtime pay, leave loading, redundancy pay, and allowances; and
- ordinary union activities becoming illegal with hefty fines attached.

As Australia faces its next federal election, nurses are demanding an improvement in the rights of all workers in Australia and are calling for;

- the right to a union negotiated collective agreement where that is the choice of a majority of employees in a workplace;
- abolition of the Australian Fair Pay Commission;
- guaranteed maintenance of penalty rates and leave entitlements for nurses;
- the removal of the unfair 'fair dismissal' legislation; and
- the right of union entry to workplaces.



“We are all feeling the pressure of Howard’s WorkChoices legislation. I know of at least one nurse and two friends who are losing their working conditions.”

“We already have to fight for a fair pay deal – what will happen to conditions if this law becomes more widespread and nurses are put on ‘AWAs’; and what about my kids?”

## Nurses vote for... all Australians gaining access to quality, comprehensive and accountable... **HEALTH CARE**

All Australians are entitled to equitable access to quality health care.

Australia's nurses are the backbone of our health care system and every day they work hard to deliver best practice nursing care.

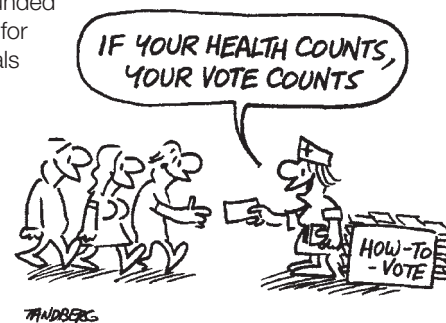
As a result of the failure to deal adequately with health issues at a national level we currently have:

- a 5% decrease in federal government funding for public hospitals resulting in an estimated \$1.1 billion shortfall in federal government funding for health;
- 600,000 Australians waiting for dental care;
- an ageing health workforce with 40% of nurses due to retire over the next 10-15 years;
- inefficient use of health workforce resources with people unable to access nurse and midwife practitioners through Medicare;
- access to quality health care becoming increasingly difficult with out of pocket costs of visiting a GP increasing from \$9.40 in 1997/1998 to \$15.82 in 2005/2006; a rate well above inflation; and
- continued neglect of the health needs of Indigenous people, people in rural areas, and those requiring mental health care.

Nurses are at the coal face of Australia's health care system – nurses know health; they understand the complexities of health and the requirements for a robust health system.

As Australia faces its next federal election, nurses want to be involved in a health care system based on the principle of universal access to quality, comprehensive and accountable health care and are calling for:

- consolidation of health funding with transparent lines of responsibility for funding delivery;
- a universal health care system with access for all based on need rather than ability to pay;
- direct access to dental services under Medicare;
- implementation of effective nursing workload measures;
- the introduction of Medicare Benefits Scheme and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme provider numbers for all nurse and midwife practitioners; and
- improved and fully funded long term strategies for groups and individuals with special needs, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people in rural areas and people requiring mental health care.



“We are increasingly pressured to care for sicker and older patients with less help, less money, less staff and less time.”

“People in the community tell me they can’t afford medical and dental care anymore – it is those people who are suffering.”

# Nurses vote for... best practice and safe nursing care delivery in... **AGED CARE**

Older Australians have the right to quality care and Australian families should be confident that their loved ones are being compassionately and safely cared for by qualified and competent professionals.

As a result of the failure to deal adequately with aged care at a national level we currently have:

- nurses working in aged care earning, on average, \$250 per week less than their colleagues in other sectors, making it impossible to attract adequate numbers of nursing staff;
- a steady decline in the number of nurses working in aged care, with a 21% decrease between 1995 and 2004 despite the increase in high-level care needs and an overall increase of 23% of residents in aged care facilities;
- rising dependency levels in aged care, with the number of residents requiring high-level care increasing from about 58% in 1998 to 69% in 2006;
- inappropriate skill mix resulting in a lack of qualified registered and enrolled nurses; and
- at least 46% of registered nurses in residential aged care being over 50 years of age and approaching retirement, higher than other areas of nursing.

As Australia faces its next federal election, Australia's nurses want a commitment to improving the level of care delivered to vulnerable older people and a stop to the exodus of nurses from the aged care sector and are calling for;

- national licensing of all direct care staff;
- the establishment of supplementary funding dedicated to achieve and maintain wage parity for those nurses working in aged care with their colleagues in other sectors; and
- the establishment of minimum nursing staff levels and an appropriate skill mix of carers (however titled) and enrolled and registered nurses throughout the aged and community care workforce.



“We all work well together but as the only registered nurse on the shift I’m spread too thinly to properly use my skills for the benefit of the residents.”

“We’re so busy; staffing levels are just too low and I work flat out. I go to work feeling tired and pressured without enough time to even chat with the residents.”

## Federal Election 2007 – MAKE IT COUNT

Before every federal election, the ANF develops a list of priorities as a focus for our lobbying with the different political parties. The ANF's six top priorities for this election are: workforce, health, aged care, industrial relations, occupational health and safety, and social justice.

This election 'pull-out' outlines the specific points in each priority area we are lobbying about and why.

In future issues of the ANJ, we will be presenting the positions of the different political parties on our priority issues and providing a summary for you.

There will be differences between the political parties in all our priority areas but the most marked difference is in the area of industrial relations. The WorkChoices legislation is a defining difference between the two major political parties; a difference which will have an impact in the federal election.

In past federal elections, the ANF has made a conscious effort to be politically neutral: to present the issues, outline the positions of the different political parties; and leave ANF members to decide on the merit or otherwise of the positions put.

However this federal election is a little different.

Since the introduction of the Howard Government's WorkChoices legislation, the ANF has been active in informing nurses about the implications of this industrial legislation for them and their colleagues. The ANF has joined the ACTU **Your Rights at Work** campaign to oppose the WorkChoices legislation and has contributed financially to that campaign.

The ACTU is the umbrella organisation for the trade union movement. The ANF is not affiliated to any political party, but we are affiliated to the ACTU.

The WorkChoices legislation has changed the balance of power in the workplace in favour of employers. If nurses are without power in the workplace; if their working conditions are such that they cannot provide safe care because of poor staffing or because of the hours they work and the workloads they carry; if nurses no longer find the nursing profession an attractive place

to be; then it is the people who need nursing care, the Australian community, who will suffer the most.

Regardless of any other policy initiatives put forward by politicians, the future of nursing and midwifery is dependent on some of the worst aspects of the WorkChoices legislation being overturned.

The ANF's core business is to represent the industrial and professional interests of nurses and midwives. It is a responsibility both Ged and I, and all the ANF state and territory Branch Secretaries, take very seriously.

The WorkChoices legislation is not in the best interests of nurses and midwives, nor of providing quality nursing and midwifery care to the Australian community.

In the lead-up to the federal election, the ANF will be continuing to campaign against the WorkChoices legislation and to support those nurses who have already been negatively affected. It is our firm view, that if nurses and midwives are going to continue to have a say in how nursing and midwifery care is provided; in the quality of that care; and in their own working conditions, then WorkChoices has to go.



Jill ILIFFE  
Federal Secretary



Gerardine (Ged) KEARNEY  
Assistant Federal Secretary