

NURSING AGREEMENT FACT SHEET 2/2008

Details of the offer

The offer has been developed in accordance with the Northern Territory Government's wages policy. Amongst other things the policy sets out the five factors upon which salary offers are made, they are:

- Productivity improvements,
- Market forces,
- Consumer Price Index,
- Government's fiscal position; and
- Government policy as determined from time to time.

In addition to these factors, the offer has been developed so as to best meet the operational and strategic needs of the Department and address the issues and concerns raised by the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) and its members. Importantly, the offer recognises the valuable role that nurses fulfil in the Territory's health and community services sector.

The offer is presented as a package of interrelated improvements to Territory nursing employment conditions over the proposed three-year duration of the agreement. Some of these improvements will be reflected in the new agreement, and others either developed further or progressed with the ANF in separate consultative forums with the Department of Health and Community Services. Employees are asked to consider its overall benefits to the nursing workforce.

Recognition and Reward

Classifications

The offer includes a new nursing classification structure designed to recognise changing roles and responsibilities, support recruitment and retention, align increment pay points within the structure and improve nursing career paths. Recognised in the classification structure is an additional pay-point for Enrolled Nurses working in advanced practice roles, a new seven level Nurse 2 classification, an additional Nurse 5 pay-point and adjustments to the Nurse 7 and Nurse 8 levels to recognise recent market dynamics at this level. It is proposed that the introduction of the new structure coincide with the first salary increase under the agreement.

Salaries

The offer is for a three-year union collective agreement with a nominal expiry date of 9 August 2011. Salary increases for employees employed at the commencement of the agreement are proposed as follows:

- An initial salary increase of 4% from the beginning of the first pay period starting on or after 9 August 2008,
- A second salary increase of 4% from the beginning of the first pay period starting on or after 9 August 2009; and
- A final salary increase of 4% from the beginning of the first pay period starting on or after 9 August 2010.

The proposed new classification model and salary scales are contained in a separate Fact Sheet.

Roles and responsibilities

The offer takes into account the ANF's claims in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the Nurse 5 Nursing Resource Consultants. The most recent Work Evaluation System review of these roles firmly determined the work value of these positions at the Nurse 5 level; however, the Department recognises the demands and difficulties placed upon the nurses performing these jobs and proposes a systemic review of their function in hospitals. This review would be conducted outside the agreement and done in consultation with the ANF and the affected employees. The ultimate aim of such a review is to improve job satisfaction for these individuals and reduce the pressures and demands of these roles.

Nurse Practitioner and Candidate Nurse Practitioner roles will be reflected in the new agreement position descriptors at the Nurse 4, 5 and 6 levels, subject to a formal work value assessment of individual roles under the Work Evaluation System. A definition of Advanced Practice will also be included for the Enrolled Nurse classification.

Conditions of employment

Rostering, overtime and on-call

The ANF has raised a number of issues in relation to nurses' conditions of employment and these are addressed in the offer. First, the Department commits to reviewing the current rostering principles and their application in workplaces and developing and implementing a new best practice model of principles across the Department which can be tailored to the specific operational requirements of each facility. The new best practice rostering principles will be integrated with the outcomes of the NHpPD project. Concurrent with the implementation of these new principles will be the roll-out of an education program for managers in the application of the new principles. It is proposed that this project be conducted outside the agreement and in consultation with the ANF.

The Department recognises that all employees and managers must ensure a safe and healthy workplace and integral to this is a safe hours of work regime. The Chief Executive of the Department, Dr Ashbridge, has publicly given his commitment to maintain safe levels of overtime and this offer strengthens that commitment. As part of this offer it is proposed that the current overtime clause in the agreement be amended to include an instruction to managers to ensure that individual nurses do not volunteer and work excessive levels of overtime. Managers will also be provided with assistance in ensuring they adhere to appropriate overtime rostering principles. The clause in the agreement will also include an instruction to managers that employees be provided with maximum notice where overtime is deferred or cancelled.

Further, the Department commits to monitor and report on levels of overtime to the Federation through the existing consultative committee. Nurse 6 hours of work will also be monitored through the consultative committee and if excessive and unreasonable levels of additional hours are evident in relation to an individual then the Department will explore options for addressing this issue. This could include a reallocation of duties or other intervention, including a request to the Commissioner for Public Employment to compensate the employee for additional hours. The Department will also review work arrangements for Community Midwives in consultation with the Federation, with agreed outcomes implemented through a Commissioner's determination.

The offer includes an increase to the on-call rate to \$2.25 per hour, noting that the rate previously increased by 33% in the 2007 agreement. The night rate will increase to \$36 and

the day/night rate to \$54. The Katherine / Gove rate for theatre nurses will increase \$3.50 per hour for weekends and public holidays.

Leave arrangements

Included in the offer is the introduction of one week's paid paternity and partner's leave and the incorporation of modernised agreement clauses covering parental, compassionate, personal, recreation leave (including cash-up provisions) and recreation leave loading. These latter clauses reflect changes necessitated by amendments to the *Workplace Relations Act* and are being implemented in all agreements across the NT Public Sector. Long service leave will also be able to be taken in minimum periods of seven days, reduced from the current minimum of 15 days.

Laundry allowance

The current uniform / laundry allowance is costly to administer. In this offer I seek its removal.

Review of hours of work, shift and overtime provisions

My Office intends to conduct a sector-wide review of hours of work, shift and overtime provisions under clause 48 of the Northern Territory Public Sector 2008-2010 Union Collective Agreement. The purpose of this project is to develop more contemporary and streamlined arrangements which simplify the administration and understanding of these provisions. In this offer I seek to include the same facilitative arrangements in the new nursing agreement.

Nursing and Midwifery Education and Training Reform Package

A major component of this offer is for the introduction of an integrated Nursing and Midwifery Education and Training Reform Package. The introduction of this package is intended to greatly increase the focus and effectiveness of current education and training activities in the Department. Further detail on the package is provided in a separate Fact Sheet; however, in summary it comprises the following elements:

- Establishment of a Nursing and Midwifery Education and Training Consultative Committee with participation on the Committee by the Federation,
- Maintenance of the current professional development allowance but with a stronger link to individual Work Performance Plans,
- Better targeted studies assistance, scholarships (including for Nurse Practitioner Candidates) and conference attendance,
- A restructured and increased Post Graduate Qualification Allowance to be introduced concurrently with arrangements to phase out the Exemplary Practice Allowance. Preservation arrangements will be introduced for employees currently receiving the Exemplary Practice Allowance; more detail on these is provided in a separate Fact Sheet.

Isolated Nursing Incentive Package

Included in the offer is a proposed Isolated Nursing Incentives Package. The package provides a comprehensive set of integrated employment conditions for remote primary health care nurses. Further detail is provided in a separate Fact Sheet; however, in summary it comprises the following elements:

- Reasonable Overtime Work Allowance in lieu of overtime and on-call,
- Responsibility allowance for senior remote nursing staff,

- Isolated nursing incentive payment,
- Reimbursement of satellite TV and internet connection and service charges,
- Professional development; and
- Assistance with freight charges.

Nursing Hours per Patient Day (NHpPD)

The Chief Executive, Dr Ashbridge, has confirmed his commitment to working with the ANF in implementing a trial of the NHpPD model in the NT hospital network. This offer builds on that commitment through a proposal to update the current clause in the agreement to reflect current developments and the future activities of the Steering Committee and the Working Group. The Steering Committee will progress the current work, Phase 2: Validation of the NHpPD model, with a commitment to commence Phase 3: Implementation of the Model, once the validation process is completed (planned for mid 2008).