

PR C2001/1712  
WF C2001/1711

6/43 Grandview Grove,  
Pahran East 3181,  
Victoria.



2<sup>nd</sup> January 2002.

To whom it may concern,

I am in receipt of a letter from Critical Solutions Nursing Agency that outlines the intention of the government to tender out nursing agency services. Thus, making it illegal for a health service to utilise any agency not approved as a successful tenderer. The successful tenderer will be that agency that adheres as closely as possible to the current award for each grade/specialist field in nursing. The letter also states that if a nurse is currently working part time, full time or on nurse bank, s/he will not be able to work at any other hospital within that network via agency.

By the government's admission, this is **against** the Trade Practices Act 1974.

These changes threaten my rights as a nurse and a professional. We continue to have difficulty staffing the department in which I work, despite the remuneration currently being offered by nursing agencies. This is **not** going to improve with the introduction of this new legislation. Nurses will **not** decide to work full time through one hospital, they will look elsewhere and expand their skills onto other professions, where they will be recognized and remunerated as professionals.

Nursing is a profession, currently it is not being recognized as a profession, despite the recent increase in wages and in benefits since the last award rounds. I have studied for five years to become a nurse and to upgrade my diploma to a degree, then to complete a post graduate certificate in my chosen field. Each time I have been to university I have funded my studies entirely, last year for the first time in Victoria, I began to receive a qualification allowance. Last year I earned under \$50,000.00, this is after 5 years at university, \$16,000 in university fees not including books, computer, travel and other incidental expenditure. This wage reflects 5 years of working as a division one registered nurse. I have attended courses /seminars outside of my work, each of these I have paid the entire cost of the seminar airfares, and accommodation. Many other professionals would expect these costs to be paid by the employer, not so with nursing.

Many nurses are not prepared to work full time, and are **not** prepared to earn less than what is currently offered for agency work.

By introducing the new legislation you are going to force more nurses out of nursing and into other professions. Thus once again :

Lengthening patient stays in Emergency departments - which in turn means that the one area within a hospital that should be prepared for disaster is stretched to it's absolute limit.

Endangering the current ANF staff patient ratios.

Lengthening waiting list time for elective surgery.

Also putting a strain on the already strained resources of the private sector.

Finally in 2001 nursing looked as though it were being regarded as a profession, and staffing levels were almost being achieved with the use of agency nurses. The new legislation is going to impact on staffing levels, and unsettle the profession once again. It is **not** going to force nurses to look for full time work within the hospital environment. It **will** encourage many registered nurses to move away from nursing as a career, and move onto a profession that is regarded as a profession and remunerated as such.

Yours faithfully,

Angela Coward. BN , CCRN.