REVIEW OF THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION ACT 1993

Registration of Nurses in Western Australia

The Nurses Board of Western Australia is the statutory body responsible for the protection of the public through the regulation of nursing practice. The Board is responsible for registering appropriately educated and qualified people to practice as nurses in Western Australia. In addition, the Board registers nurses from other states and territories of Australia under the Mutual Recognition Act (MRA) of 1993.

Western Australia is not a signatory to the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA) of 1998; therefore the Board does not register nurses from New Zealand under this Arrangement. The Board does however work closely with the New Zealand Nursing Council through the Australian Nursing Council to develop similar standards and policies for registration processes. Implementation of the TTMRA in Western Australia would further enhance and streamline the registration process for applicants from either country.

Implementation Issues

The MRA implementation benefits and costs to the Board, in dollar terms, cannot be easily identified or quantified, however the staff and customer satisfaction aspects can easily be demonstrated as follows:

a) Applicants for registration
   - A reduction in the number of documents required for registration.
   - A shorter turnaround time from application to registration. Usually the applicant if applying in person can be given deemed registration on the day of application. Deemed registration provides one month's registration and allows nurses to commence work immediately whilst further verification of their qualifications and experience are being sought.

b) For employers
   - Nurses can be registered and commence work almost immediately upon arrival in Western Australia.

c) For the Board
   - Ability to process a greater number of applications in a given timeframe due to a reduction in the number of documents required for registering an applicant. The time saved can then be used for planning and quality improvement in other board registration functions.

Impediments to greater harmonization between states and territories flow from differences in Nurses Acts across Australia. Such variations include different divisions or categories of the register, different or no currency of practice requirements, and differing requirements for educational preparation of applicants.

To date the Nurses Board of Western Australia has not been involved in any disputes related to implementation of the Mutual Recognition Agreement.