



Patrick Laplagne
Mutual Recognition Review
Productivity Commission
LB2 Collins Street East
Melbourne VICTORIA 8003

Dear Mr Laplagne

Thank you for providing the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) with the opportunity to make comment to the Productivity Commission's Review of Mutual Recognition Schemes.

The ANMC was established in 1992 to facilitate a national approach to nursing and midwifery regulation. It is the peak body that works with state and territory Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authorities in developing standards for statutory nursing and midwifery regulation. These standards are flexible, effective and responsive to the health care requirements of the Australian population.

The ANMC's prime function is to protect public safety, in the provision of healthcare, through ensuring that the nurses and midwives are competent to practice. In view of this we will limit our comment to questions/issues raised in Sections 5, 7 and 8 of the Issues Paper.

Section 5

The discussion paper identifies the intention to create a single national registration and accreditation system for nine health professions under the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). The ANMC is highly supportive of, and involved in, this initiative.

National registration facilitates the use of national standards and accreditation mechanisms, improves the tracking and management of complaints against practitioners and removes 'jurisdiction shopping and hopping'. The ANMC notes that there have been instances in some jurisdictions, in clear contradiction of the legislation, whereby applicants have lodged their application but their application has not been considered for several months, rather than the legislative requirement of one month. National registration under the IGA would remove such jurisdictional differences.

Section 7

Our understanding of the English language component of the European Union (EU) model is that evidence of English language proficiency is not required if the applicant originates from an EU member country. We feel very strongly that this is an aspect of another model that we would not want adopted in Australia. Proficient oral, written and verbal English language skills are essential skills for health professionals to have in order to ensure safety of the public. In Australia the current guidelines for assessment of overseas trained nurses and midwives incorporates evidence of English language skills for all but those coming from a few countries. This is a far better system for protecting the public.

Section 8

While unlikely, there are potential implications for the TTMRA from Australia and New Zealand's bilateral engagement with third countries. Using the Australian, ASEAN, New Zealand Free Trade Agreement as an example, if either Australia or New Zealand was to make special exemptions that affected English language proficiency, then there would be flow on effects to the other country through the TTMRA. While the ANMC is involved in discussions with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to ensure domestic regulatory standards are maintained we have no control over the decisions made by New Zealand.

Once again the ANMC welcomes the opportunity to comment on this important initiative.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Karen Cook', is positioned above the printed name.

Karen Cook
Chief Executive Officer