

Date: 11th April 2016

Dubious Journalism perhaps more an issue than dubious degrees?

On Wednesday 6th April the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) 7.30 program broadcast an interview with Federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham during which a number of inferences were made about the validity of Nursing as a degree in the Higher Education sector.

During the interview Leigh Sales of the ABC made the following statement, “Too many people going to university to do dubious degrees that don't really give them any chance of having meaningful or secure employment” and then continued “When you go back, say, 30 years ago, a lot of things that are now considered professions were trades. So you take nursing ...you learned on the job and yet now people go to university for three years to do that and what I'm asking is: is that really what those people should be doing?”

The Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (CDNM), Australia & New Zealand utterly and comprehensively refutes the inference that Nursing is a “dubious degree” and is confident that all available evidence indicates the very opposite.

Professor Wendy Cross, Chair of the CDNM explains, “Overall, there is significant evidence to support the provision of a nursing workforce prepared at baccalaureate level or higher, as this is associated with better patient outcomes. More significantly, Australia and New Zealand in common with other developed health systems face major challenges in sustaining a health workforce that will meet the rapidly rising demand for health care. Demand is being driven by an ageing population living longer with more complex problems, combined with rising costs of technology and treatment and increasing consumer expectations. To meet these challenges the educational preparation of registered nurses and midwives to practice in these highly complex systems becomes critical.”

Professor Cross goes on to provide additional evidence in answer to the ABC's inaccurate assessment of the validity of Nursing degrees, “Hospitals with a higher percentage of Registered Nurses with baccalaureate or higher degrees had lower

rates of congestive heart failure mortality, hospital-acquired decubitus ulcers, failure to rescue, and postoperative deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolism, as well as shorter length of stay.”

The CDN is the peak organisation that represents the Deans and Heads of the Schools of Nursing and Midwifery throughout Australia and New Zealand. The Council is the voice of tertiary education for nurses and midwives, and provides leadership on health policy, education standards and research as applied to nurses and midwives. The Council encourages responsive and responsible approaches to university education that meet the current and future needs of people and communities.

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