



## **PRESS STATEMENT ON 2003-2004 BUDGET FROM THE AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF DEANS OF NURSING**

The Australian Council of Deans of Nursing congratulates the federal Minister for Education and the Treasurer on several aspects dealing with nursing education in the new federal Budget. In particular, the additional funding for clinical practice in nursing is welcomed.

The Council is gratified to see the true costs of nurse education more appropriately recognised, with additional federal funding to the level of \$9733 per student especially directed to the costs of clinical training. The Council's view is that nurse education should be funded at least at the level of Cluster 8 (which includes Science and Surveying) at \$12303 and will continue to campaign for this; but it recognises that some progress has been made. It is also pleased that the HECS charge for nurse education has been capped at the 2003 level (along with the charge for teacher education) instead of rising together with all other undergraduate fees.

However, the Council is concerned that, whilst funding levels have increased, there is insufficient detail on how funds are to be directed and there are no measures in place for ensuring that the Schools of Nursing will be the recipients of such funding. How much of these funds a School of Nursing will actually receive depends on what university administrators withhold for general university purposes, but we note that there is an intention to monitor earmarked expenditure. The Council would expect that a guarantee of funds being directed through the higher education structure in line with appropriate governance practices be applied.

Whilst the Council acknowledges the Government's recognition of Nursing as a national priority and the increase of \$40.4 million in Commonwealth funding over four years, we believe it is insufficient given the projected national shortfall of almost 4000 pre-registration nurse education graduates by 2006, as identified in a report commissioned by the Council, *Australian nurse supply and demand to 2006: A projections model and its application*.

We welcome the extra 210 places allocated for regional campuses with a rise to 574 places by 2007. While the intention to increase places for student nurses in regional areas is commendable, the question arises whether the regional universities can find the extra clinical places for nursing students within the region. If the regions cannot take up all their extra places, we can assure the Government that there is still a need in metropolitan areas.

We applaud the increase in support for Indigenous education generally. Within the nursing profession there is a great need for more indigenous nurses, and we hope they will be a target group for such support. We applaud also the initiative to help students

from rural and remote areas with accommodation scholarships so that they can afford to attend universities which offer courses they desire.

The five-year Entitlement to higher education is another positive step. We have noted with pleasure that a number of students are recognising Nursing as a good first degree, then going on to graduate degrees in Law or Medicine. This can only benefit all three professions. We note also the Government's intention to extend the entitlement some years after graduation, to foster further education in all professions, and we stand ready to discuss possible measures with the Minister and his Department.

We congratulate the Government on increasing funds for research, some of which will benefit research in nursing. We hope that funds will be provided for a Health Workforce Cooperative Research Centre, which has been urged for some time.

We look forward to the establishment of the Nursing and Nursing Education Taskforce, as was recommended in the National Review of Nursing Education, to implement the other recommendations of that Review, and of this Budget.

**If you require further information, please contact Associate Professor Pauline Nugent, Chairperson – ACDN on (03)9244 6578.**