

## COUNCIL OF DEANS OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY

The Australian Council of Deans of Nursing at their Annual General Meeting in Melbourne today (19 Sept 03) resolved to include the Deans of Nursing and Midwifery and of New Zealand universities in their membership, and to change their name to the Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand).

The Deans considered the reforms proposed by the Commonwealth Minister, Brendan Nelson, and found points both to commend and of concern to the Council. The Deans welcome the extra money proposed (\$40 million) for improving the quality of clinical education for nursing students, and in particular welcome the fact that this money is earmarked specifically for this purpose.

They note also the proposal to allocate an extra 210 places for nursing students. However, these will do little to address the national shortage of nurses. Dr Nelson's own Review of Nursing Education last year recommended an extra 400 places in the first year and a further 400 in the following year. The Deans believe there is an urgent need to increase the number of nursing students as well as taking other measures to meet the national shortage.

The Deans also pointed to an inconsistency in the Government's approach to the funding of nursing education. They welcome the prohibition on increasing the HECS fees for nursing courses, since they would not wish to see nursing graduates burdened with even more debt than they will now be. However, in other fields of study universities are able to increase their resources through raising their HECS fees. Without that mechanism, the Government is the only source to increase resources for the work of Schools of Nursing, and the Deans urge the Government to accept their responsibility to supply the 30 per cent extra that universities are able to raise in other fields. Otherwise in the longer term, Schools of Nursing will gradually be starved of resources and the number of places and quality of nursing education and therefore of patient care will inevitably decline.

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