

BH:AG

6 December 2011

The Hon. Jillian Skinner MP
Minister for Health
Governor Macquarie Tower
Level 31, 1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

Re: Nursing and Midwifery Recency of Practice Registration Standard

As you are aware, we currently have a situation in NSW where nurses and midwives wishing to return to work after an absence of 5 years are now required to complete a re-entry course at substantial cost in order to meet the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Recency of Practice Registration Standard (the Standard).

While we support the principle that nurses and midwives must maintain recency of practice and professional currency in order to maintain registration, we are deeply concerned about the situation of many NSW nurses and midwives who have been 'caught out' by retrospective application of the Standard.

In particular, we are concerned about nurses and midwives who have taken parental leave in the five years prior to the introduction of the Standard on the basis that they would be able to return to work when their children started school. Many of these nurses and midwives report that they have fallen short of the requirements necessary to be eligible for renewal of their registration.

On its face the Board's retrospective imposition of the Standard constitutes indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex/pregnancy and/or family and carer's responsibilities and we have written to the NMBA to raise these concerns.

Aside from these individual concerns, we are also deeply disappointed that the NSW health system could potentially lose these skilled and experienced nurses and midwives from the system.

We have recommended to the NMBA that a period of special consideration be implemented for NSW nurses and midwives wishing to return to work and we seek NSW Health's support and cooperation to implement a temporary scheme that will enable these nurses and midwives to return to work safely in NSW public hospitals.

This temporary arrangement could operate on a similar basis to previous arrangements where individual nurses' and midwives' needs for support were assessed and attended to by nurse/midwifery educators.

To discuss this matter further, please contact Kate Adams, Manager of Professional Services at this office (02 8595 2179).

Yours sincerely

BRETT HOLMES
General Secretary