



China FTA Taskforce
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Re: Submission on negotiation of FTA between Australia and China

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the potential of a free trade agreement between China and Australia.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) is a peak national organisation established in 1992 to facilitate a national approach to nursing and midwifery regulation. The ANMC works in close partnership with the state and territory nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities in evolving nursing and midwifery standards that are flexible, effective and responsive to the health care requirements of the Australian community.

Our core activities are:

- Identifying matters which impact on, or are relevant to statutory nursing and midwifery regulation
- Establishing, reviewing and promoting national standards frameworks for nursing and midwifery practice in Australia
- Undertaking assessments of overseas qualified nurses and midwives consistent with the registration and/or enrolment requirements of the Australian nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities
- Initiating and participating in relevant projects on regulation that aid the future growth and development of the nursing and midwifery professions
- Ensuring nursing and midwifery standards reflect the contemporary needs of the Australian community
- Fostering consultative mechanisms with key stakeholders to assist in the statutory regulation of the nursing and midwifery professions

The regulation of nurses and midwives is a state based process in accordance with individual jurisdictional legislation. However, all nurses and midwives regardless of their state of registration must demonstrate competency against the national standards developed by the ANMC before they may register/ enroll and again on an annual basis to renew their registration/enrolment. These same national competency standards are used to assess international nurses/midwives who wish to practice in Australia either on a temporary or permanent basis.

Nurses from China are currently practicing in many states/territories of Australia. Anecdotally the state with most nurses from China is Victoria. The ANMC has recently completed a project reviewing the educational qualifications of nurses from China. Council has in principle agreed to the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1

Nurses who have successfully completed a nursing qualification in China post 1975 be eligible for registration as a nurse (Division 1) after completion of the following:

- Pass an English language competency test (as per each authorities requirements)
- Demonstrate registered nurse competencies through a process approved by a NMRA

Recommendation #2

Nurses who have successfully completed a nursing qualification in China post 1975 and then successfully completed the 2-year training program in Singapore and have gained registration in Singapore be eligible for registration as a Nurse (Division 1) after completion of the following:

- Pass an English language competency test (as per each authorities requirements)

Competency programs suggested in Recommendation #1 are approved at a state/territory level. English requirements are nationally consistent. The Standard adopted is an IELTS (Academic) of overall score of 7 with 6.5 in each category or an Occupational English Test pass of B in each category.

The ANMC adheres to the ICN Ethical recruitment statement (2001) which states "ICN and its member associations firmly believe that quality health care is directly dependent on an adequate supply of qualified nursing personnel. ICN recognises that right of individual nurses to migrate, while acknowledging the possible adverse effect that international migration may have on health care quality. ICN condemns the practice of recruiting nurses to countries where authorities have failed to address human resources planning and problems that cause nurses to leave the profession and discourage them from returning to nursing

ANMC would be opposed to any government movement as part of a free trade agreement which did not keep paramount the issues of regulation. Regulation is about protection of the public; as such Nursing/Midwifery Regulatory Authorities maintain the need to assess the ability to practice of nurses and midwives who have not been educated in Australia against the same standards expected of Australian nurses and midwives. When internationally educated nurses and midwives do not meet this standard they must complete a competency program approved by a state/territory Nursing/Midwifery Regulatory Authority. In this way the Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authorities ensure the continued provision of standards of nursing and midwifery care which protect the public.

Karen Cook
Chief Executive Officer (Acting)
17 June 2005