



# **New Zealand Nurses Organisation**

## **Submission to the Ministry of Social Development on the**

### ***Caring for New Zealand Carers* consultation document**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the discussion document *Caring for New Zealand Carers* and commends the Ministry of Social Development and the Carers Alliance for developing a national Caring Strategy which supports carers and affirms their contribution to the social and economic well being of Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. The New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) is a Te Tiriti o Waitangi based organisation which represents 39,000 health workers. NZNO is the professional body of nurses and the leading nursing union in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our members include nurses, midwives, students, health care workers, care givers and other health professionals.
3. The NZNO is an affiliate of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (CTU) and supports the points made in the CTU response to the *Caring for New Zealand Carers* document.
4. The NZNO notes that Nurses are affected not only as workers who may provide unpaid care, but also as health professionals who interact with carers and their families, whanau and friends on a daily basis. The shortage of trained staff and lack of mandatory safe staffing levels, particularly in Aged-care and Dementia-care, impacts heavily on voluntary carers, paid care givers and nursing staff. In addition, nursing is a predominantly female profession and it is women who continue to be the main providers of care.
5. The NZNO welcomes a carers' strategy. It notes, however, that the framework supporting the draft vision and principles lacks practical measures to sustain carers in tangible ways.
6. The NZNO regards a 'one-stop' shop for accessing the wide range of information carers need as a priority and notes the work of Carers New Zealand in this regard.

## NZNO RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

**Question 1.** Vision and Principles: Do you think the vision and the six principles in the consultation document recognise carers' needs sufficiently? If not how would you change them?

7. NZNO recommend:

- That the first statement in the suggested vision is replaced with principle 1 to read: Aotearoa New Zealand is a society which recognises and values the essential contribution of family, whanau and other informal carers to New Zealand's families, communities, society and economy. .
- adding "and are not unduly disadvantaged, financially or otherwise, by undertaking voluntary care" to the vision statement to read: Carers' voices are heard in decision-making that affects them and are not unduly disadvantaged, financially or otherwise by undertaking voluntary care. .
- replacing the words 'ensure' and 'encourage' in principles 4 and 5 with the word 'provide' to read: 4. Provide support for family , whanau and other informal carers to enable them to carry out their role with integrity, respect and as little stress as possible. 5. Provide information, supports and resources that are proactive, high quality, customer focused and empower carers

**Question 2.** Themes: Which of the eight themes in the consultation document require immediate attention and which themes should be addressed over the longer term?

8. Themes 3, 4 and 5 *Education, employment and financial support, Information and planning for caring; and Provision of professional and social supports* are themes requiring immediate and coordinated attention. Together they give substance to the first theme, *Recognition*.

**Question 3.** Recognition: Do you think that carers are effectively recognised and valued at the moment; if not what would help carers feel more recognised and valued?

9. Carers know when they are valued when they have timely access to the help and information they need. The issues confronting carers such as the bewildering array of systems and organisations they may need to access for equipment, respite, clinical care, and financial assistance, for example, will not be materially helped with “more formal structures to better represent carers’ interests to the Government”, “voluntary registration schemes” or “business discounts”.
10. Tangible measures such as assistance with transport, accessing equipment and respite care, and a ‘one stop shop’ for information such as that [provided by Carers New Zealand, however, are more likely to result in carers feeling valued.

**Question 4.** Health and Wellbeing: What could be done to help carers protect their health and wellbeing?

11. The health and wellbeing of the carer is paramount and NZNO supports the suggestions for improving access to information, counselling, especially through key transitions and social networks.
12. Access to respite care whether at another facility (either day care or residential) and home-based respite care is important as is access to equipment.

**Questions 5 & 6 & 7.** Financial, Education and Employment Support: How can the government provide as much flexibility as possible for employers? What do employers need to do to help balance paid work and caring?

13. NZNO welcomes the acknowledgement of the ongoing financial burden that long term carers face. We support initiatives to encourage
  - flexibility in the workplace such as those in the Flexible Work Hours Bill currently having its second reading in parliament;

- help with training and education. NZNO notes that the National Certificate in Community Support Services (Foundation Skills) course for carers, developed by Community Support Industry Training Organisation, Careerforce, is recognised by the National Qualifications Authority framework but is, as yet, unresourced for voluntary carers. Training has a significant impact on the quality and safety of care delivered and the confidence of the carer, maximising the value of their contribution to healthcare, and minimising the risks to both carers and those they care for.; and
- better pay and conditions for registered health care workers and caregivers.

14. NZNO notes that while there is a shortage of paid staff, some carers are forced to provide care beyond what is safe for either themselves or the recipient of their care. Unrealistic expectations, inadequate remuneration and stressful working conditions perpetuate the chronic shortage of health care workers and inadequate practical and professional support for carers.

**Questions 8 & 9.** Information and planning: What type of information do carers need and what are the best ways to provide them with information and advice? How can carers be helped to plan for themselves and the person they are caring for?

15. NZNO regards a 'one-stop' shop for accessing the wide range of information carers need as a priority.

16. NZNO notes that the not-for-profit organisation Carers New Zealand representing 420 000 family support carers has established an excellent quarterly publication, website, email hotline and daily telephone helpline. NZNO suggests that such a 'grassroots' organisation arising from and catering for carers themselves and which has established relationships with business, government and health care organisations could be a good starting point for providing services similar to the Australia Carer Resource Centres.

17. Information and resources need to be developed promoting the work, worth and roles of carers, targeting carers and the wider community and distributed widely through health and social sector organisations.

**Question 10.** Professional and social supports: What changes need to be made to support services to carers?

18. NZNO note that many carers would like more support and recognition from health sector professionals and that this requires both time and training. But particularly in the aged-care sector, where there are currently no mandatory minimum staffing levels, there may be no health professional to liaise with carers, or who has the time to do so. Mandatory safe staffing levels as recommended in the New Zealand Standards handbook *Indicators for Safe Aged-care and Dementia-care for Consumer*<sup>7</sup> are essential for ensuring minimum levels of professional support for carers. More work would be required to achieve the enhanced level of support this document outlines.

**Questions 11 & 12 & 13 & 14.** Young, Maori, Pacific and other minority or disadvantaged carers: What other challenges do Māori and whānau carers face, and what are the best ways to support them? What other challenges do Pacific carers and carers from other ethnic minorities face, and what are the best ways to support them? Are there any other groups of carers who may be particularly disadvantaged in their caring role, and how could they be better supported? (For example, ethnic minorities, refugees, rural carers, and gay, lesbian and bisexual partners in caring roles.)

19. NZNO recognises that discrimination and prejudice towards minority groups exists in nursing and are aware of the extra stress this may impose. Nurses are encouraged to examine their behaviour to ensure it is not prejudicial, promote good practice and provide equal opportunities in relation to service provision and to challenge homophobia and prejudice in the workplace where they encounter it. Nurses are guided by the NZNO's *Code of Ethics* which has as core values ethics of partnership, caring, diversity, effective communication, justice, sharing, freedom and accountability. The Nursing Council of New Zealand's *Code of Conduct* sets the scope and standards of practise under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 which requires nurses to act ethically,

respecting the rights of patients and family, practise in a manner that is culturally safe and in compliance with the Treaty of Waitangi.

20. NZNO notes that the District Health Boards Research Fund has recently awarded \$1.47 million to CBG Health Research Limited for a research project to identify actions and solutions that improve access to health services for vulnerable population groups. The project has a particular focus on access to primary care, medications and diagnostic services.

## REFERENCES

NZ Nurses Organisation, (1995), *Code of Ethics*, NZNO

NZ Nurses Organisation, (1997), *Nature and Scope of Professional Nursing Practice*, NZNO

Nursing Council of NZ, (2006), *Code of Ethics*, NCNZ

Standards New Zealand, (2005), *New Zealand Handbook: Indicators for Safe Aged-care and Dementia-care for consumers*, SNZ HB 8163:2005, NZ Standards Council

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