Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA)

Transition to Practice Pilot Program 2015–2018

The Transition to Practice Pilot Program is part of the Commonwealth-funded Nursing in Primary Health Care Program and supports two health workforce policy goals:
1. Build capacity among the primary health care nursing workforce by promoting the employment of, and providing support to, nurses working in primary health care settings.
2. Undertake reform and innovation in the primary health care nursing workforce, to better address the primary health care needs of Australian communities.

Intended outcome and aims of the program
The program seeks to improve employment opportunities, recruitment and retention of nurses in primary health care settings. It also aims to:
- Support the transition to primary health care of nurses, both recently graduated and experienced nurses transitioning from other areas of practice, in two tranches from 2016–2018.
- Test and model an accessible, flexible and structured process to increase the confidence, competencies, skills and knowledge of recent graduates and existing nurses transitioning to primary health care settings.

Where are we now?
- Tranche 1 concluded March 2017, interviews are continuing and all data is being evaluated.
- Tranche 2 commenced April 2017, with an induction workshop for successful applicants 27 and 28 April 2017.
- APNA continues to engage with primary health care nursing sectors and stakeholders to inform the key elements of the Transition to Practice Pilot Program to continue to ensure continuous quality improvement.
- Stakeholders included, were nurses in aged care, correctional and custodial health, community health, Aboriginal health and general practice.
- A literature review on Australian and international models of preceptorship and mentorship has been undertaken.

Elements of the Transition to Practice Pilot Program
The Transition to Practice model aims to increase the confidence, skills and knowledge of nurses commencing work in primary health care settings through the combined influence of both professional and clinical guidance and support, and in conjunction with elements of formal education which is selected through a self-assessment framework and developed further through a personalised action plan.

In summary the elements of the program include:
- Mentor support – professional and clinical guidance.
- Education activities – core and optional.
- APNA nurse support and Evaluation.

Tranche 1: April 2016–March 2017
Tranche 1 concluded in March 2017 and final data is being collected and evaluated.

The successful nurses in Tranche 1 included:
- 25 recently graduated and experienced transitioning nurses new to primary health care.
- 15 internal workplace nurse preceptors.
- 7 external nurse mentors.
- 6 external nurse mentor/preceptors (dual role).

Tranche 2: April 2017–March 2018
Tranche 2 commenced in April 2017 following an expression of interest (28 October 2016 to 20 January 2017) and selection process which concluded 31 March 2017.

The successful nurses in Tranche 2 included:
- 27 recently graduated and experienced transitioning nurses new to primary health care.
- 20 external clinical and professional nurse mentors.

“Definitely... I can say overall it did help a lot with my confidence. I'm more confident now with tackling patients, looking after patients... knowing that I'm doing the right thing. Definitely – confidence and skills did really improve.”

[Transitioning Nurse 369]

Evaluation of the Transition to Practice Pilot Program
The evaluation of tranche 1 is underway through a mixed methodology. The scope of evaluation will assess whether:
- Understanding, enacting, and supporting the roles and responsibilities of each participant is pivotal to enhancing the transition process and encouraging nurses to seek further career progression in their chosen primary health care field.

“The first thing I noticed in the program was that all of a sudden, I was really confident about speaking out about the issues I was facing at work.”

[Transitioning Nurse 349]

Who are we?
Alessa Coughlin - Program Director
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Dan Borg - Program Evaluation Officer

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