



4 August 2010

Mr Stephen Sedgwick
Australian Public Service Commissioner
Aviation House
16 Furzer Street
PHILLIP ACT 2606

Dear Mr Sedgwick

Consultation to Revise the Australian Public Service Values

Thank you for your letter inviting the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) to participate in the consultation process to revise the *Australian Public Service Values*.

With a membership of over 175,000, the ANF is the largest industrial and professional organisation in Australia for nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing. Members are employed in a wide range of enterprises in urban, rural and remote locations in both the public and private health and aged care sectors.

The current *Australian Public Service (APS) Values* statements have a strong focus on employment and performance within the public service. This seems to be in contrast to the overseas and Australian States and Territories Codes as outlined at the conclusion of the paper, which have greater orientation beyond the public service to the community it serves. Specifically, elements not included, and which the ANF considers to be important, are: respect, transparency, confidentiality, and responsiveness to the public.

Respect: Codes of ethics have been developed to guide the practice of the nursing and midwifery professions in Australia. For nurses these have been in existence since 1999 and for midwives since 2008. A set of eight value statements is embedded in the Code for each profession. Value Statement 2 of the Code of Ethics for nurses (and the same is reflected in the midwives Code) reads: *Nurses value respect and kindness for self and others*. Of importance to the APS values are concepts from the nurses Code of recognising the power differential between APS employees and members of the public and being respectful of the views of others in all interactions. The word 'respect' is used in several of the example Codes and needs to appear in the APS Values.

Transparency and confidentiality: The Canadian *Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service* reflect worthwhile sentiments in relation to transparency and confidentiality as follows: *Public servants should also strive to ensure that the value of transparency in government is upheld while respecting their duties of confidentiality under the law*. This statement seems to have captured the need for the public service to be transparent in its activities and the expenditure of public monies, while tempering this with a requirement to protect confidentiality of individuals or organisations.

Responsiveness to the public: The APS values talk about the APS being “responsive to the Government ...” but it is the view of the ANF that the APS must also make a declaration for being responsive to the public. The ACT public service reflect the dual levels of responsibility for public servants with the words: “Responsiveness to the requirements of the government and the needs of the public”.

Essentially, the ANF considers that the APS Values as they stand form a useful base document which could be strengthened through revision to include the specific items outlined above.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the APS Values. Should you require any additional information or wish to discuss this matter further please contact Elizabeth Foley on (03) 9602 8500 or elizabethf@anf.org.au.

Yours sincerely



Lee Thomas
Federal Secretary

The industrial and professional organisation for nurses and midwives in Australia

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