

14 December 2007

Indonesia – Australia FTA Feasibility Study  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
RG Casey Building  
John McEwen Crescent  
Barton ACT 0221

### **Australia –Indonesia free trade agreement (FTA)**

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the potential impact of a free trade agreement between Australia and Indonesia.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) was established in 1992 as the peak body to develop a national approach to regulation of nurses and midwives. The ANMC is gazetted by the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship as the relevant assessing authority for nurses and midwives who wish to migrate to Australia using the skilled migration program.

Nurses and midwives are assessed using the ANMC standards and criteria consistent with the registration and/or enrolment requirements of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authorities (NMRAs). The ANMC assesses overseas trained nurses against these standards ensuring that each applicant can demonstrate competency.

In applying for a skills assessment to the ANMC applicants must include transcripts of initial nursing / midwifery education, professional reference from a current employer, verification from their current registering authority that the person has no negative actions or conditions placed upon their registration and finally, evidence of English language proficiency.

The ANMC supports the feasibility study however ANMC is opposed to any government movement as part of a free trade agreement which may impact negatively on the integrity of the regulatory process. Regulation is about the protection of the public; as such Nursing and Midwifery Regulatory Authorities maintain the need to assess the ability to practise of nurses and midwives who have not been educated in Australia, against the same standards expected of Australian nurses and midwives. All nurses and midwives in Australia and overseas nurses and midwives are required to meet the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Competency standards. When internationally educated nurses and midwives do not meet these standards they must

complete a competency program approved by the 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.

For the information of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade:

On the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Indonesian independence the Northern Territory government, as a gift to Indonesia, began a vocational development program in the form of scholarships for 20 Indonesian registered nurses. These 20 nurses, graduates from the University of Indonesia, completed a six-month education program through Charles Darwin University and 18 months of supervised clinical experience at Royal Darwin Hospital and Alice Springs Hospital beginning in 2006. Prior to coming to Australia the 20 nurses undertook an English language preparation program in Jakarta. The nurses needed an IELTS of 6.5 to commence the course with the prediction that this would lead to a 7 band at the completion of their studies.

At the end of their program the nurses who are on 457 subclass visas, have been allowed to stay and work in Australia for up to four years to assist with the nursing wide shortage.

I trust that this information may be useful to the Department in future negotiations with the Indonesian government.

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