

Program Background

Older people are choosing to stay at home and the need for comprehensive community aged care is increasing.

The National Health and Hospitals Network- Workforce measures announced in the 2010-2011 Budget a number of workforce initiatives that will enable the health and aged care workforce to meet the needs of today and growing demands of the future in the aged care sector.

The Nurse Practitioner Aged Care Models of Practice program is one element of these initiatives that supports aged care workforce reforms. It builds on other Government measures which promote nurse practitioners as part of the primary health care workforce.

The Nurse Practitioner Models of practice Program aims to support and evaluate up to 25 nurse practitioner models of practice in Australian aged care settings and promulgate the results across the sector.

The purpose of this program is to provide funding to develop, test and evaluate different models of practice for nurse practitioners in aged care.

Aim of the project is to

- Demonstrates effective, economically viable and sustainable models of practice;
- Facilitate the growth of the aged care nurse practitioner workforce; and
- Improve access to primary health care for clients of residential and community aged care services.

A nurse practitioner is a registered nurse educated and authorised to function autonomously and collaboratively in an advanced and extended clinical role. The nurse practitioner role includes assessment and management of clients using nursing knowledge and skills and may include, but is not limited to, direct referral of patients to other health professionals, prescribing medication and ordering diagnostic investigation.

It must be understood the Nurse Practitioner role is a complementary role to the GP and Specialist. While the NP can receive independent referrals it is the preference of the NP to work collaboratively with the attending GP and/or Specialist

Denise Simmons qualified as an Endorsed Nurse Practitioner in Chronic Disease/Palliative Care in 2010, yet the opportunity to develop this role was not available at the Sunshine Coast. Denise has worked in the acute sector since moving to the Sunshine Coast from Toowoomba in 2005 and she identified a need for service to assist the elderly patient to remain in their homes or RACF while receiving complementary GP service.

Emergency Departments and Acute Units are accommodating elderly patients who would much prefer their own homes if care was available.

Denise submitted a model of care to the Dept. of Health and ageing based on the following concepts:

- **Chronic Disease Management Program, prompting early discharge from hospital and monitoring self management/clinical supervision in the home or RACF, while working in conjunction with the GP.**
- **Independent referral to the NP Aged Care from any RACF / GP / DEM to monitor care of a patient in their home or RACF thus avoiding hospitalization or re-admission.**
- **Palliative care intervention to patients with end stage disease who chose to remain at home or in RACF again while working with the GP/Specialist.**
- **Mandatory assessments in RACFs**

While Denise is celebrating over 40 years of acute nursing this year she was considering semi retirement when the Dept. informed her she had been successful with her conceptual application.

The successful applicants were supported with grants up to \$700,000 each and the project will run until mid 2014.

While Denise has extensive qualifications in Palliative Care, Coronary Care and Chronic disease nursing, she is equally complemented with a partner Lynne Hones who is equally qualified in Aged care and Wound Care management.

While Denise will concentrate on the development of a Heart Failure Service and community referrals, Lynne will concentrate on referrals associated with the RACFs. Both NPs are endorsed and all patients are bulk billed as per their agreement.

Denise and Lynne are keen to talk to NP candidates on the Sunshine Coast interested in Chronic Disease/Aged Care seeking experience and mentoring.

Denise and Lynne are busy promoting the new health service to General Practitioners, Specialists, Residential Aged Care Facilities and Emergency Departments.

General Practitioners are encouraged to make contact with this service and discuss the scope of the NP.

Referrals to NPAC (Nurse Practitioners in Aged Care) are by phone. Referrals may be made by General Practitioners, Specialist, RACFs and independent clients.

Phone Denise 0400646027 / Lynne 0432062990