

FAIR WORK AUSTRALIA

Matter No. B2011/3940

Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) application for a low paid authorisation

WITNESS STATEMENT OF MAREE JOY CRAWFORD

I, Maree Joy Crawford of [REDACTED], in the State of Tasmania state as follows:

1. I was employed as a Practice Nurse at the Flinders Island General Practice from may 2005 to August 2010. I resigned on 23 August 2010.

My resume is at Attachment A to this statement

2. I was employed for this period at the clinic which originally was owned and operated by Gemini Medical Services and then by IPN for the last 2 years.

3. I am currently at Flinders Island Multi Purpose Centre which is a state public sector facility where my base hourly rate is \$40.60

4. My nursing qualifications are:

- Registered Nurse
- Graduate Certificate in Practice Nursing
- Accredited Nurse Immuniser
- Pap smear provider

5. My employment history as a nurse includes:

- General/Oncology Nursing
- Surgical/Gynae Nursing
- Rural and Remote Nursing
- General Practice Nursing

6. In my role as a practice nurse at the Flinders Island General Practice my broad responsibilities included:

- Phlebotomy
- Health assessments and care planning
- Lifestyle counselling

- Assistance to doctor with procedures
7. As a Practice Nurse I was paid \$28 per hour. A similar role in community health pays around \$34 per hour but these nurses are not required to perform at a "special nurse" level, as I believe practice nurses are.
 8. As a health professional, I am required to undertake professional development activities to satisfy registration requirements and also to be able to perform within scope of practice. Upon enquiring my employers reluctantly agreed to pay a small amount each year for the costs of courses I was required to attend. That amount did not meet all of my costs. My employer did not provide study days.
 9. In my experience there are a number of reasons why practice nurses wages and employment conditions are inferior. Firstly, the Nurses Award is outdated and is not relevant to the roles and responsibilities a practice nurse now performs. There is no structure in the Nurses Award which is relevant to practice nurses. It is all about employment in the hospitals sector. Also, as most practices are a private enterprise many employers will follow the award rather than provide a fair and reasonable wage reflecting the duties of the practice nurse.
 10. The reason I no longer work as a practice nurse is that the wages and conditions are so poor. I attach my resignation letter as Attachment B to this statement which provides further detail. From my experience I consider that the quality of care to patients will always be high regardless of wages and conditions. However, other non- clinical duties are impacted as time constraints and incentives aren't there.

Signed: Maree Crawford

Date: 28/2/12

ATTACHMENT A: Resume of Maree Crawford

ATTACHMENT B: Letter of resignation as practice nurse

Maree Crawford

Personal Information

[REDACTED]
Flinders Island
Tasmania 7255

Phone [REDACTED]

E-mail [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Summary of qualifications

Registered Nurse
Launceston General Hospital 1985 – 1988

Registered General Nurse Training

Pass in final examinations

Further Education

2005 **Certificate IV Workplace Assessment and Training**
(Esset Australia)

2009 **Graduate Certificate in Practice Nursing**
(University of Sunshine Coast)

2009 **Certificate III Diabetes management in General Practice**
(Diabetes Tasmania)

2010 **Graduate Diploma Nurse Immuniser**
(University of Tasmania)

Professional experience

- 18/2/85 – 3/3/88

Student Nurse at Launceston General Hospital

- 25/4/88 – 15/4/89

Fulltime Registered Nurse at LGH –
Oncology/Medical

- 30/7/90 – 10/3/91

Fulltime Registered Nurse at St. John of God
Hospital, Subiaco, Western Australia. General
surgical/Gynecology

- 15/3/91 – 30/5/91

Fulltime Registered Nurse at

Laverton District Hospital, Western Australia.
General nursing, A & E, dealing with indigenous
and non-indigenous clients. Mining accidents.

- 8/4/92 – 26/6/92

Fulltime relieving Community Nurse at Wiluna
Health Centre, Wiluna, Western Australia.
Dealing mainly with the aboriginal community and
some work from the mine. Acute care with after
hours and weekend on-call. Primary health care,
preventative health programmes. Liaising with
RFDS doctors at Meekatharra.

- May 2005 – August 2010

Practice Nurse, part time, at Flinders Island
General Practice

Phlebotomy, assisting doctor, ear syringing, Well
Women's health checks, all types of health
assessments, wound management, performing
ECG, spirometry, chronic disease management
and education, quit smoking counseling, lifestyle
counseling. Liaising with multidisciplinary health
care team. Ordering stores and supplies.

Occasional reception duties. Precepted medical and nursing students

Initiated dialogue and assisted with a grant to secure pharmacists to come to the Island to perform Home Medication Reviews.

Assisted with a grant to develop a Health Promotions Officer position for the Island

- **August 1993 – present time**
Casual Registered Nurse at Flinders Island Multipurpose Centre.

Aged care, acute care, A & E.

Including Acting Manager duties at times, Preceptor for Nursing Students.

Hold MPC Portfolio for Chronic Disease Management and Immunisation/Cold Chain

Additional professional activities

- Various Professional Development courses and sessions between 1998-2002 (not kept a record)
- 2002 Distinction: First Line Emergency Response course
- 2006 Fire Warden Course
- 2006 Well Women's Screening course (Family Planning)
- 2006 Understanding Mental Health (GP North)
- 2006 Quitline Quit smoking course
- 2006 Medication Management Package
- 2007 Nursing Board of Tasmania Preceptor Education Program
- 2007 First Line Emergency Response Course (UTas)
- 2007 Managing aggression and personal safety with Forensic Mental Health Team
- 2007 Asthma Workshop (GP North)
- 2007 APNA modules- Understanding the Medicare Benefits Schedule, Mental Health,
- 2007 GP Learning modules- Helping patients to quit smoking; Helping patients to be non-smokers; Physical activity in General Practice.
- 2008 Recognise and respond to domestic and family violence (Lifeline)
- 2008 Diabetes Management for Practice Nurses (GP North)
- 2009 Youth Mental Health First Aid Course
- 2009 Adult Mental Health First Aid Course
- 2009 Strengthening Nutrition in General Practice (DHHS)

- 2009 Ear Irrigation (The Benchmark Group)
- 2010 Stanford Chronic Disease Self Management leader course
- 2011 Peripheral Cannulation Learning Package (Launceston General Hospital)

Courses in progress:

Launceston General Hospital Preceptor Course

Graduate Certificate in Chronic Disease Self Management Advisor

(The Benchmark Group) commencing march 2011

Professional memberships

Royal College of Nursing Australia

Australian Practice Nurse Association

Australian Nursing Federation

References

Available on request

ATTACHMENT B: Letter of resignation

Letter of resignation

To whom it may concern

Please accept this as 4 weeks notice of resignation (as per contract) from my role as Practice Nurse at Flinders Island General Practice.

I can no longer work for a company who does not care or show compassion for their employees or patients of a General Practice and who is only interested in how much revenue it can make. I do acknowledge the Medicare system as it is doesn't help the situation.

I have enjoyed this job immensely and have gained a lot professionally but I have now lost all interest, drive and commitment due to the attitudes of people in management of this Company. I have only stayed this long because of the pleasure the patients give me and the opportunity to work closely with a GP.

I am a highly trained health professional, not a handyman, not a receptionist, not an IT guru, not an equipment technician, nor an accountant but these are some of the jobs that get lumped in my lap and get in the way of my real job- caring for my community, patient care.

I have a Graduate Certificate in Practice Nursing, trained to do Pap smears and women's health, trained in ear syringing, Certificate III in Diabetes Management, have completed the Lifeline course in Domestic Violence, and a Nutrition Certificate. I have done numerous online courses including Quit Smoking, Physical activity, Mental Health. I am currently enrolled in Nurse Immuniser course as well as suturing and casting. I am unsure as to whether I should continue with these. I am interested to go on and study Nurse Practitioner in General Practice but from my experience Gemini/IPN/Prime will not support me through the course or afterwards by creating a Nurse Practitioner position. When this practice goes back to one doctor you will need one.

Also, I almost singlehandedly got our last accreditation granted, pushed for and got funding for HMR pharmacists to come to the Island, and was recently involved in GP North getting funding for a Health Promotions Officer on the Island. All of this has gone unrecognized, unrewarded and mostly unsupported by Gemini. GP North and APNA have been very supportive.

I am tired of fighting for anything to get done. I no longer want to feel the humiliation of begging for medical equipment that may or may not be granted, and if it is granted the equipment may be inappropriate to a rural and remote area, or is 3rd or 4th hand found in a cupboard in WA and then breaks down 3 months later. I came back from holidays and things were broken or not working- 2 computers, ECG machine, spirometer, cryo set up that never worked and is still sitting here.

I would still love to work in General Practice and am very excited about the direction the Practice Nurse specialization is heading but I am no longer prepared to wait for change or to put up with low wage, increased workload, poor working conditions and a manager or two who don't show any appreciation or thanks for anything I have achieved. Communication is virtually nil and it's usually a complaint or more demands.

Good luck in finding a replacement.

Yours sincerely,

*Maree Crawford
Registered Nurse
Flinders Island, Tasmania*