Position Statement: Single Nurse Posts

INTRODUCTION

CRANAplus is the peak professional body for remote & isolated health, providing advice to Government, service providers, clinicians, and consumers on equitable access to safe high quality health services.

The three pillars of CRANAplus are:

- Advocacy
- Education
- Support

Single Nurse Post

Traditionally these positions have been in the context of a solo nurse position with no other health profession or support staff, in small remote communities. This situation may occur in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities, small remote communities, mining and tourism within all types of health services, be they Government, Non Government, Aboriginal Medical Services and Community Controlled Organisations. Although this usually only applies to Nurses, it may also apply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers.

It is important to note that this description does not apply to health services that may only employ one Nurse but there are other health staff from other disciplines, and/or community support staff, co-located. It only refers to the single solo professional post.

The situation where these health services appoint solo positions may not have a high workload on a day-to-day basis, but the staff member is continuously on call and it is impossible to take a day off without leaving town. The individuals are usually of high profile in the community, and by nature of being part of the community make themselves available.

The role of these solo practitioners are diverse by necessity, therefore means, as well as providing clinical care, they may be Ambulance driver, airstrip manager/controller to name just a few.

CRANAplus believes that:
These positions impact on safety & quality and have a high level of risk, impacting on the safety of the individual Health Professional and ultimately of the community. The Quality of care may be compromised due to fatigue arising from long hours on call and fatigue contributes to error. The Impact on the workforce is a high turnover of staff, professional isolation, and exploitation.

CRANAplus believes that many of these risks can be safely mitigated by ensuring robust systems around fatigue management, vehicle safety, evacuation protocols, clinical decision making and staff preparation, education, orientation and support. This has proven successful in many other industries such as aviation.
CRANAplus recommends:

- Small communities continue to have access to health services.
- Single positions of any health professional are discontinued.
- Employers need to be resourceful in providing additional health staff through different models of care and ensuring that no one individual health professional is placed to provide 24/7 health service care to the community.

CRANAplus resolves to:
Continue lobbying Government and other employers against solo positions in the interest of safe quality care to communities and duty of care to the workforce.


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