



# NURSING & MIDWIFERY OFFICE NEWSLETTER



Volume 14 June 2008

## From the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer

Dear Colleagues

This edition of the Nursing & Midwifery Office Newsletter is dedicated to our fabulous week long celebration of International Nurses and Midwives days 2008.

I am so proud of the work and collegiality of ACT nurses and midwives and this week really was a celebration of our professions.

I am pleased to say the week was well profiled in the media with five radio interviews on 666ABC, a WIN TV profile and a Canberra Times article, all highlighting the International midwives and nurses days, the week's events as well as the professions and individual roles of some of our ACT nurses and midwives.

*Joy Vickerstaff*

## International Nursing and Midwifery Week

Many nurses and midwives from across the ACT participated in the wonderful events organized to celebrate International Nurses and Midwives Week 2008.

The week began with the raising of 'Midwives and Nurses Week' flags in the Centre of Canberra and at The Canberra Hospital on Monday 5th May.



2008 Nursing and  
Midwifery Awards night

## International Midwives Day 5th May 2008

### *Cultural and Spirituality of Traditional Australia*

### *Min Mia – Aboriginal Senior woman, educator and healer*

Midwives and guests gathered together to listen to an interesting and thought provoking talk from Min Mia, an Aboriginal Senior woman, educator and healer from Broulee. Min shared with us her thoughts and tribal beliefs in regard to birthing and each baby's 'life journey'. Min talked about Miwi – each person's spirit and how when babies are born, the Miwi light is only a flicker for the first twenty-four hours. Because of this, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders believe that the baby should not be washed during the first day of life until the Miwi light is strong. She went on to say that it is most important not to cut the umbilical cord until it has stopped pulsating and that the

placenta should be buried in the earth either under or beside a life giving tree such as the grevillea. Min Mia also shared with the audience stories about the dream-time and the rainbow serpent. It was a most enlightening afternoon and our thanks go to Min Mia for providing a deeper understanding of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture and also

sharing with us her wonderful life tales.

Min very kindly did an interview with 666ABC's Genevieve Jacobs on her afternoon show.

Additional thanks must also go to Joyce Graham, Vanessa Owen and her team at The Canberra Hospital for organising the talk and providing the venue.



Min Mia  
speaking  
to midwives  
at TCH

# ACT Nursing and Midwifery Awards Night – 8th May and the winners were...

On Thursday 8th May more than 400 nurses and midwives from across the ACT excitedly gathered (with much encouragement from our gregarious MC Grant Carey-Ide) at Rydges Lakeside to celebrate the fourth 2008 ACT Midwives and Nurses Awards presentation evening as part of the International Nurses and Midwives Week celebrations.

This year there was great anticipation prior to the event with over 80 nominations received from the public, private and aged care sectors. Nominations were divided across 7 categories of nursing and midwifery excellence including clinical, research, education, enrolled nurse, management, team and an inaugural award for assistant in nursing/personal care worker. From all nominations the ACT Nurse and ACT Midwife of the Year were chosen.

The event was an enormous success, attended by our Chief Executive, Mark Cormack and Acting Chief Nurse, Joy Vickerstaff who presented the awards including:

**ACT Midwife of the Year, Carolyn Patterson, Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Midwifery Access Program**

**ACT Nurse of the Year, Barbara Harvie CNC, Renal Outpatient Services, TCH.**

These major awards were generously sponsored by HESTA and The College of Nursing. Other sponsors included ACT N&M Registration Board, CIT, RCNA, Dymocks Belconnen and Digital City.

For the first time a photographic competition was held in the lead up to International Nurses & Midwives Week with the theme 'Your photo, your place, your profession'. There

were two 'highly commended' prizes which were awarded to Cindy Hansen and Joselyn Eling and the winning photo from

Winnunga Nimmityjah was unveiled by Mark Cormack on the night. All winners received Dymocks Belconnen book vouchers. The photos from the competition were joined with a number of other photos from various nursing and midwifery locations across the ACT and were presented in an inspiring montage at the awards night.

Each year this event has grown in stature and numbers and it is widely recognised as the 'night of nights' for nurses and midwives of the ACT.

A list of all the nominees and winners is available on the Nursing & Midwifery website, and a photo gallery of all the events will be uploaded in the next week.



L-R Barbara Harvie, Mark Cormack, Carolyn Patterson and Elaine Lawler (HESTA)

The winners in the other categories were:

Category	Winner		
Clinical	Joanne Costuna	CNC, Aged and Dementia Care	Jindalee Aged Care
Management	Margaret Stuart	Aged Care & Rehabilitation Services	ACT Health
Education	Jon Darvill	Paediatric Educator	SDU, ACT Health
Team	Gastroenterology & Hepatology Unit,	The Canberra Hospital	ACT Health
Enrolled Nurse	Josephine Green	Maternity Unit	Calvary John James Hospital
Research	Heather McKay	Project Co-ordinator, Early Recognition of the Deteriorating Patient	Patient Safety and Quality Unit, ACT Health
AIN/Personal Care Worker	Camille Cheater	Personal Care Worker, Resident Liaison,	Villagio Sant'Antonio

## Remembrance and Thanksgiving Ceremony at the War Memorial

On Friday 9th May over one hundred people attended a Remembrance and Thanksgiving Ceremony for nurses and midwives. The ceremony was held at the Australian War Memorial to honour those who lost their lives in serving their country, those who have participated in service both nationally and internationally, and those defence nurses currently serving. Acting Chief Nurse Joy Vickerstaff spoke in awe of the nurse's uniform with bullet hole on display within the War Memorial which was worn by Vivian Bullwinkel, the only survivor of 22 nurses who were massacred on Radji Beach, Banka Island in 1942. Group Captain Michael Paterson spoke about the courage of Australian Defence Nurses who have served around the world across many

wars, including his own recent experiences serving in Iraq. The service was also attended by a number of ex-defence nurses who were happy to catch up with old friends and make new ones over morning tea. Many of those who stayed for morning tea also enjoyed looking at the amazing War Memorial photos of Australian nurses from across the wars including one of members of the Australian Army Nursing Service pictured on camels in

front of the Sphinx and pyramids taken in 1915.

We would like to acknowledge the kind support and work of Joanne Smedley and the Australian War Memorial for making available a collection of their nursing war photos. These were displayed at the Awards Night and at the Remembrance and Thanksgiving Ceremony during International Midwives and Nurses Week.



L-R Coralie Gerrard, Carol Cartwright, Joy Vickerstaff, Michael Paterson, Elizabeth Foley and Audrey Phillips

## 2008 Oration – Philip Darbyshire presents *How can you bear to be a nurse?*

Monday 12th May was International Nurses Day and this very special occasion in the nurses' calendar was marked with an Oration by Professor Philip Darbyshire, an eminent Nursing leader in the area of children's, youth and women's health. Professor Darbyshire's talk entitled 'How can you bear to be a Nurse?' was entertaining, thought provoking and inspirational for the hundred plus nurses who attended from across the ACT. He did look grand and most fitting in his full Scottish and Academic dress with the backdrop of the elegant Hall at ANU's University House. We

were amused by his very humorous Gordon Ramsay impersonation (complete with 'censored' sign) applied to the nursing ward instead of the restaurant kitchen, but the highlight was his emphasis on the seemingly inconsequential actions (eg a bed bath, taking a blood pressure) that nurses and midwives perform everyday that engender the greatest respect and appreciation from the people we serve when they are at their most vulnerable. It is often the smallest and kindest actions that are long remembered. From the most technical task to the instinctive response, nurses and midwives

are truly inspiring people and can be proud of their professions.

Many nurses and midwives have requested a copy of Professor Darbyshire's Oration - he intends to publish it and will supply a copy as soon as this is organised. It will be made available on the Nursing & Midwifery website.



To highlight the dynamic and varied roles of nurses and midwives in the ACT the Nursing and Midwifery Office have decided to feature a nurse or midwife profile in each of the newsletters. If you know of any nurse or midwife who may like to share their 'story' with us please contact the Nursing and Midwifery Office on 6205 1417.

## Melissa Parker

Melissa has worked for the past four years conducting research and coordinating the Canberra Endometriosis Centre, based at The Canberra Hospital. The multidisciplinary centre provides treatment, management and ongoing support for teenagers and women with endometriosis.

Melissa became interested in endometriosis after being diagnosed with the condition during her new graduate nursing year in ACT Health. Following the completion of the graduate year, Melissa found herself working in the operating rooms where she came into contact with mild to severe forms of endometriosis. At the same time she became involved in organising and running the ACT Endometriosis Association and Support Group with a small number of women assisting her in the group's development. As she says, 'this was not done alone, it was a team approach.'

In 1995-96 Melissa moved to Women & Children's Health at TCH and completed her midwifery training. A fortuitous meeting with Dr. Anne Sneddon revealed a mutual interest in endometriosis and a desire to increase awareness of the disease and work with teenagers to facilitate earlier diagnosis. However, at this time there was no opportunity to provide this service. After six years working in midwifery Melissa was engaged by the Research Centre for Nursing & Midwifery Practice to work on a number of research projects. In the meantime, Dr. Sneddon went to Sydney to further her studies and laparoscopic surgical skills in excising endometriosis.

On Dr. Sneddon's return to the ACT as a staff specialist, she and Melissa joined forces to conduct the MDOT Study for which Melissa received a 2004-2005 grant through the ACT Health and Medical Research Council. The project surveyed 1051 16-18 year old girls to establish the 'typical' experience of menstruation for the sample, as well as how many girls had significant menstrual disturbance that could be caused by endometriosis.

Whilst conducting the MDOT (Menstrual Disorder of Teenagers) Study Melissa has also completed a Masters in Nursing by Research through the University of Canberra. Combining her professional experiences in theatres, midwifery and research, Melissa works under a Continuity of Care Model providing care for women and teenagers in the Canberra Endometriosis Centre during their visits, in the operating theatres (as an anaesthetic nurse) if they require surgery and then follow up afterwards with post operative visits. This model has received very positive feedback from the women. Future plans include further development of the Endometriosis Centre, development of a screening tool and education package for the school setting and further research.

During 2005 Melissa attended the 9th World Congress on Endometriosis in Maastricht in the Netherlands where she won the prize for Best Poster. More recently, Melissa attended the 10th World Congress on Endometriosis held in Melbourne where she presented and won a Best Clinical Presentation award. Additionally, Melissa has won the University of Canberra Vice Chancellor's Research Poster Prize, was nominated for Excellence in Nursing Research (2007) and has been interviewed on the radio and for the Canberra Times about her research. As an indicator of how the patients appreciate the care being provided by Melissa and Dr. Sneddon they were recently recognised with an ACT International Women's Day award for services to women with endometriosis. "My nursing and midwifery career has taken me to places I never thought I would go" said Melissa. Melissa's working wisdoms:

- keep learning
- be prepared to move out of your comfort zone, find your passion - something you feel strongly about that you can contribute or make a difference to
- seek out and surround yourself with the people who share your passion/goals or who can help you achieve them.



Favourite inspiring quote:  
Energy and persistence  
conquer all things  
(Benjamin Franklin).

Melissa Parker