

"The ANF (Vic Branch) values the Project as a necessary opportunity to assist in improving the working lives of nurses."

Lisa Fitzpatrick
Secretary
Australian Nursing Federation (Victorian Branch)

"It would be appropriate for the health industry to negotiate with nurses, rehabilitation providers, workers' compensation systems and the government to develop a cohesive, integrated, and meaningful rehabilitation package which addresses the special issues faced by injured nurses. Let's not forget, a small minority of nurses will never be able to return to work and need to be cared for appropriately."

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Injured Nurses Support Group

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Nurses Return to Work in Hospitals Project



An Australian Nursing
Federation
(Victorian Branch)
Project

Injured and ill nurses who want to return to their profession are often prevented due to poor rehabilitation and return to work practices.

Victorian nurses suffered over 8000 compensated work injuries between 2000-2006. Of which, there were over 1000 compensated work injuries to nurses in 2006.

The Victorian WorkCover Authority has approved the Australian Nursing Federation (Victorian Branch) application for a three-year **Return to Work Project** for nurses injured and ill through work in hospitals.

The Australian Nursing Federation (Victoria Branch) is joined in the project by:

- Victorian Hospitals' Industrial Association, representing employers in public health facilities;
- Injured Nurses Support Group, representing injured and ill nurses; and
- Dr Helen Sutcliffe, providing additional experience of injured and ill nurses.

The aims of the three-year project in the hospital sector are to:

- identify barriers to and factors for successful return to work
- promote early and proactive return to work
- achieve meaningful, productive, safe and durable return to work
- identify strategies to support long-term injured nurses
- promote a holistic approach to rehabilitation and return to work.

The project will assist in the hospital sector to:

- improve rehabilitation and return to work outcomes
- reduce the human and financial costs of injury and illness
- reduce the loss of skilled nurses and the associated costs of nurse shortages, recruitment and training
- promote recruitment and retention.

There will be regular progress reports on the project, with conferences for the health sector at the completion of the project.

The project will involve three phases:

Phase A - to be completed in 2007

- Identification of barriers to and factors for successful return to work for nurses, including a:
- literature review and initial report on barriers to and factors for successful return to work for nurses
 - report on experience of injured and ill nurses.

Phase B – to be completed in 2008

- Report on consultation with key organisations on return to work.
Return to work pilot programs with seven pilot hospitals.
Report on duties and employment opportunities to support return to work.

Phase C - to be completed in 2009

- Evaluation of programs in pilot hospitals.
Development of:
- return to work guidance and awareness material for nurses and employers in hospitals
 - return to work training materials
 - return to work best practice guidelines
 - return to work case studies.

What nurses say:

"Have you got a lifetime so I can tell you: I live day by day; I have sold almost everything I own; and I live well below the poverty line."

Injured nurse

What nurses say:

"I am very depressed, I dread my future."

Injured nurse

What nurses say:

"Being able to return to work reduces the stress that is caused by not having a job. Depression and stress are very high when you don't have a job, and don't see any prospect of getting one."

Injured nurse