

**THE VALUE OF TRANSITION SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR
NEWLY REGISTERED NURSES AND THE HOSPITALS
OFFERING THE PROGRAMS IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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Statement of Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees (where required).

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Date

ABSTRACT

The research reported in this thesis explored the perceived value of transition support programs for newly registered nurses in New South Wales and the health care facilities offering such programs. Although transition support programs have been designed and implemented in various forms since the transfer of nurse education to the tertiary sector, there remains little evaluative evidence of the value of such programs.

Two groups of registered nurses formed the participants in this study. The first were new graduate nurses who completed a transition support program within the past 12 months. The second comprised experienced nurses who worked with new graduate nurses during their transition support program. The study was carried out in seven hospitals in area health services across and around Sydney, representing both small and large facilities with bed numbers ranging from 195 to 530.

Data were collected from four sources including the printed materials made available by sample hospitals. Questionnaires, interviews and observations were used to determine the purposes, outcomes and strengths and weaknesses of transition support programs. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and theme extraction.

The themes described the ways in which the transition support programs were used to facilitate the transition of the newly registered nurse to confident beginning practitioner. There was widespread belief from the study participants that some aspects of nurse education at university were inadequate. As a result, various structures and policies were required to support the new graduate nurses as they entered the workplace. The transition support programs were used to increase nursing staff for the study hospitals and to provide new learning opportunities for new graduate nurses to enable them to develop the clinical and professional skills required of competent registered nurses. The rotational aspect of the transition support programs were used to provide staff for the less popular areas of the hospital as well as a variety of experiences and skill development opportunities that were considered lacking in the current undergraduate education of nurses. The work environment where the programs operate were described as difficult with nurses exposed to

violence and bullying practices from fellow staff and frequently required to work with a less than ideal number or appropriate skill mix of nursing staff. The hospitals also used the transition support program to exert a controlling influence over the new graduate nurse by way of roster management, assessment of skills and the expectation that each nurse would complete a transition support program before being offered full time work.

The thesis concludes with recommendations and future research avenues. It would be useful for hospitals to conduct formal evaluations of the transition support program they offer to provide the most effective program possible. One source of information could be sought from the new graduate nurses regarding their needs during the first six months of employment. It is also suggested that a study be commenced that investigates the reasons behind the perception that nurse education at universities in New South Wales is inadequate.