


<b>Title</b>	<b>Further rationalisation of nursing awards will erode working conditions</b>
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Brief Introduction	<div data-bbox="459 387 1321 517">  <h2 data-bbox="579 443 1193 517">Further rationalisation of nursing awards will erode working conditions</h2> </div> <p data-bbox="459 526 662 685">The Howard Government passed its regressive WorkChoices Bill in December last year and immediately set about an award rationalisation process that, if successful, will lead to a dramatic erosion of nurses' working conditions currently available in awards.</p> <p data-bbox="459 689 662 871">Unions and the general public have been given only one month – during the holiday season – to make submissions to the Award Review Taskforce Secretariat. The Taskforce is charged with the rationalisation of federal award wage and classification structures and a reduction in the number of awards.</p> <p data-bbox="459 875 662 999">The Taskforce discussion paper, which invites submissions, describes a central plank of the rationalisation process in the following terms: <i>Awards will also cover a narrower range of issues. Award terms relating</i></p> <p data-bbox="671 526 874 685"><i>to wages, classification structures, casual loadings and piece rates will be removed from awards and set and reviewed by the Australian Fair Pay Commission (Fair Pay Commission) as part of the new Australian Pay and Classification Scales (APCSs).</i></p> <p data-bbox="671 689 874 958">The majority of Australian nurses are employed under federal awards except in NSW, in the private sector in Queensland and more recently in the public sector in Tasmania where state awards apply. It is estimated that 20-30% of nurses have their wages and conditions of employment determined by federal or state safety net awards. These nurses are generally employed in aged care facilities, GP clinics and other small businesses.</p> <p data-bbox="671 963 874 999">Between 70-80% of the nursing profession is covered by</p> <p data-bbox="884 526 1086 672">collective agreements negotiated on their behalf by the ANF. The collective agreements, however, are read in conjunction with the relevant federal or state award in recognition of the continuing importance of the award system.</p> <p data-bbox="884 676 1086 922">Since the late 1980s federal and state industrial tribunals have developed and maintained common national nursing industry wages and conditions, accepting that nurses should be remunerated on the basis of their skills, education and experience. During this period federal and state industrial tribunals also supported the inclusion of a comprehensive classification and pay structure within nursing awards.</p> <p data-bbox="884 927 1086 999">The 'simplification' of federal nursing awards commenced by the Australian Government in 1996 reduced many of the</p> <p data-bbox="1096 526 1299 741">employment conditions able to be included in awards, although nursing was successful in maintaining classification structures based on the qualifications and experience of nurses. The current 'rationalisation' process will further reduce the allowable matters in awards, including classification structures. It is also intended to reduce the number of awards.</p> <p data-bbox="1096 745 1299 922">In its submission to the Taskforce, the ANF will argue, among other things, that the award rationalisation process will seriously erode the working conditions of nurses, driving them from the profession and as a consequence, undermine the quality of nursing care and patient safety.</p> <p data-bbox="1096 927 1299 999">A copy of the Taskforce discussion paper is available at: <a href="http://www.awardreviewtaskforce.gov.au">www.awardreviewtaskforce.gov.au</a></p>