



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

QToN No. 1

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELLBEING
Mr Johnathan Davis MLA (Chair), Mr James Milligan MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

Inquiry into Recovery Plan for Nursing and Midwifery Workers
HEARING TRANSCRIPT EXTRACT FOR QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE (QToN)
14 June 2023

Asked by **MR JAMES MILLIGAN MLA** on 14 June 2023: Mr Titus took on notice the following question(s):

Reference: *Hansard transcript* 14 June 2023, pages 6-7

In relation to:

- *Data on nursing/midwifery bridging courses for international students in ACT compared to other States/Territories*

MR MILLIGAN: Yes. Thank you.

In your submission, you mentioned that the ACT offers fewer vocational education training programs, extensive programs, compared to other states and territories around the country. I was just wondering if you could elaborate a little bit more on what those extensive programs are. What does it look like? And what is being offered in other states that we should be offering here?

Mr Titus: Yes. I think I can speak to that a bit more.

Essentially these—when nurses, international nurses, come into Australia, there is a decision made as to whether their degrees are equivalent or not. And where they are found not to be equivalent enough, they are required to take bridging courses or additional study and further study.

So, from memory, at the time that we were looking at it, I think it was either one or two. But I would have to re-look into that again because I cannot remember exactly. And I know—I would like to know that there is proposals to increase so called micro-courses that have kind of very recently—that would also contribute towards reskilling the workforce and labour force.

So that is kind of—that is effectively what we are talking about. We are talking about programs that enable international nurses to bring their qualifications into the state. And then use them.

And essentially the reason these are important, especially—particularly bridging courses are usually around three to four months, from what my memory is, is that a large contingent of international nurses that come up, they come with families. And they do not really come from a particularly advantageous financial position. So therefore they are having to feed kids, feed perhaps spouses or partners, having to feed maybe even elders or stuff like that.

So therefore it is very important that they find work quickly and find well commentated work as quickly as possible. And that will determine largely whether or not they are even able to have the time to go into longer degree education that would then enable them to be considered a comparative to Australia.

Yes, that is—yes—

MR MILLIGAN: And you mentioned that other states and territories offer more bridging courses compared to what we do here in the ACT for international students?

Mr Titus: Yes. I would have to—if it is okay, I can—I would like to provide a more definitive answer. I do not have that on my papers right now. But I believe it was the—I believe Victoria and New South Wales are probably the best. They offer the most number of them, particularly in, I think, University of Victoria, if I am correct.

But I do not know that for certain. So, rather than me giving a—something that is incorrect, if it is okay, would we be able to take this on notice and provide you with a better answer?

THE CHAIR: Sounds great.

The answer to the Member's question is as follow:

To summarise: smaller states and territories have fewer VET/Bridging courses which are more expensive. Since only a third of migrants are able to get their degrees recognised these courses are usually required for progressing a career.

According to a study by Tan and Cebulla, in comparison to Victoria and New South Wales, smaller states and territories have disproportionately fewer VET providers (VRQA, 2021). This leads to higher costs and fewer options limiting the capacity to upskill and enter higher levels of employment. We would also like to note that reports suggest that Australia has inefficient qualification recognition schemes which ultimately force trained professionals with recent practice to go through expensive VET courses. This can be problematic for recent migrants with children who must provide for education. Some reports suggest that only a third of migrants with qualifications have their degrees recognised, even if they have a masters from a reputable overseas university. Reports attribute this to the fact that we have 34 different authorities that govern around 400 professions, many of which rely on outdated data to make determinations about the quality of overseas courses.

If there is Anything else that you require or if this answer is insufficient, please reach out.

We have included the references for this below.

Kind regards,
Alexander Titus

Tan, G, and Cebulla, A, 2022, 'When what you have is not enough—Acquiring Australian qualifications to overcome non-recognition of overseas skills', International Migration, pp.1-21, DOI: 10.1111/imig.13030.

Rachwani, M. (2023). Migrant groups urge reform of Australia's 'broken' skills recognition process. *The Guardian*. [online] 19 Jun. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jun/19/migrant-groups-urge-reform-of-australias-broken-skills-recognition-process> [Accessed 27 Jun. 2023].