



Queensland Health Rural & Remote Nursing Relief Program INFORMATION SHEET No. 2 RELIEF NURSE APPLICANTS

Queensland Health has established a statewide system of rural and remote nursing relief. The *Queensland Health Rural and Remote Nursing Relief Program* provides a pool of relief nursing (Registered and enrolled) staff for Queensland Health's rural and remote facilities. This pool of relief nurses is used for the purposes of planned relief for periods of up to three (3) months duration.

Background

Recommendation 15 from the Ministerial Taskforce on Nursing Recruitment and Retention is *that a state-wide system is developed to organise rotations of nursing staff from rural and remote locations between tertiary and secondary locations*. The trialling of different models at a Zonal level identified a number of implementation issues. In examining these issues, the Ministerial Taskforce Implementation Group (MTIG) requested there be a Corporate approach to the implementation of this recommendation. In examining these issues on review of the program in October 2005, it was recommended that the system be centralised to a state-wide coordination model of management. A Rural Relief steering committee was established (representative of key stakeholder including Directors of Nursing from around the state both regional and rural together with representative relief nurses) The recommendation supported the establishment of a State Coordinators role and Executive sponsorship was accepted by Rockhampton Health Service District.

Purpose

Staffing numbers in rural and remote facilities do not always provide for backfilling of nursing positions when the incumbent is on leave. The Rural and Remote Nursing Relief Program will provide Queensland Health's rural and remote facilities with a pool of appropriately skilled nurses who are available to assist by undertaking short-term relief duties.

Glossary

Receiving Facility: The facility receiving the services of a Relief Nurse.

Relinquishing Facility: The facility providing the Relief Nurse.

Relief Nurse: The nurse providing the relief.

Relief Agreement: The agreement signed by each party involved with a Relief Assignment ie. The Receiving Facility, the Relinquishing Facility and the Relief Nurse.

Relief Assignment: One (1) booked request for relief.

What are the benefits for the Relief Nurse?

Nurses employed by Queensland Health have the opportunity of working in, and contributing to, a range of facilities across Queensland without having to commit themselves to permanent relocation; they have the choice of relieving for periods of between Two (2) weeks and Three (3) months duration and the choice of which District(s) they provide relief to.

Relief Nurses retain their substantive position and associated entitlements, such as accumulation of recreation and long service leave and superannuation, while on a Relief Assignment. Relief nurses are also provided with some educational preparation where necessary, travel to and from the Receiving Facility, accommodation, meals and incidental expenses while relieving.

Queensland Health provides Cultural Awareness training to employees. Health Service Districts continue to provide this training and it is expected that Relief Nurses will attend. The Queensland Health Rural and Remote Nursing Relief Program will provide training for Relief Nurses without the core clinical knowledge and skills necessary to practise confidently and safely in rural and remote areas.

What are the expectations of the Relief Nurse?

Relief Nurses are expected to “add value” to the facility in which they are relieving that is, they will:

- contribute to the development of the facility and its staff
- be practising within a performance management framework
- be familiar with Queensland Health policies and procedures
- be prepared for their role as a reliever.

In regard to “contributing to the development of the facility and its staff”, Relief Nurses are expected to offer their experience and/or expertise to facilitate the development of new initiatives in the Receiving Facility. The Director of Nursing (or their delegate) requiring relief will negotiate the “added value” component of the relief assignment directly with the relieving nurse. This will differ for each relief assignment and may include activities such as quality improvement or educational initiatives.

In addition to this, there are “Rights and Responsibilities” the Relief Nurse, the Relinquishing Facility, the Receiving Facility and Corporate Office are expected to observe. These are attached.

Applications

Registered and Enrolled nurses employed by Queensland Health are invited to apply to be in the relief pool by completing an Application Form. Applications are not restricted to nurses in specific positions or specific locations – all nurses are welcome to apply. The Director of Nursing of the facility at which you are based is required to support your application. Applications are assessed and applicants are formally notified if their application is accepted. Acceptance onto the Queensland Health Rural and Remote Nursing Relief Program is not a guarantee that nurses will be requested to provide short term relief; this will be dependent on rural and/or remote facilities requiring relief, the relief position requirements and the ability of facilities to release the relieving nurse.

How does it Work?

The Relief Nurse provides a range of information on their application form, including their expertise and experience, any special needs they may have when providing relief, availability dates etc. This information is entered into a database. When a facility wants a Relief Nurse the following steps occur:

1. A search for a nurse meeting the criteria needed
2. Identifying that the Relinquishing Facility is able to release the nurse for the dates required
3. Identifying that the Relief Nurse is available to provide the relief.
4. Relief Nurse is assigned to the Relief Assignment
5. Finalising of arrangements for the relief assignment for example, notification of pay office, organisation of travel etc.

Further Information

Application Forms are available through QHEPS:

(<http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/odb/hau/nursing/Html/RRNRP.htm>) or by contacting the State Coordinator:

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