

# **Educating the Enrolled Nurse;**

## **Has the Enrolled Nurse Grown Out of the VET/TAFE Sector?**

Historically, the “Enrolled Nurse”, the “Division 2 Nurse” or the “Nurse’s Aide” encompassed a role within the health care team that involved caring for patient’s activities of daily living including assisting with meals, toileting, taking observations, personal care and maintaining a safe, tidy environment similar to the role of the personal care worker of today.

Along with advances in technology and the ageing population of registered nurses, enrolled nurses’ knowledge and skill set have increased greatly.

The course has moved from a 12-month Certificate IV to a 2-year Diploma level with Advanced Diploma options.

The skills of the Enrolled Nurse have advanced greatly with the course now including complex wound care, catheter insertion, taking ECG’s, NGT insertion, medication administration including intravenous medications and caring for a patient with intravenous therapy and blood transfusions.

The Enrolled Nurse works under the direct or indirect supervision of a registered nurse, the level of supervision varies according to the health care environment.

Both registered nurses and enrolled nurses have a similar knowledge base with registered nurses course encompassing more specialty areas throughout the course.

In the workplace, all nurses are part of the health care team which includes medical staff and a variety of many other allied health professionals. All the other health professionals are educated in a university environment where they have the ability to collaborate and learn together, exploring each other’s role in the health care team and utilising resources more effectively.

The Enrolled Nurse should be in this mix too.

The framework of ASQA and the Health Training Package that the Diploma of Nursing course is taught within is very prescriptive and restrictive taking the education away from holistic patient care to task orientated care and skill lists.

The Enrolled Nurse is expected to work as part of the health care team and make care decisions on their patient assessments.

A more collaborative approach to the education of nurses could involve all nurses studying the same curriculum for 18 months or 2 years to gain knowledge required for the enrolled nurse qualification, those wishing to gain a registered nurse qualification continue their studies for another 12 months and attain the Bachelor degree.

Industry will see nurses prepared for the team environment that they work in together with an understanding of the education of both.

All nurses could be trained either in universities or in colleges and VET institutions that have partnerships with universities allowing greater usage of simulation labs where all health care team students could work collaboratively in the simulation learning environment within their respective job role.