



AQNL 2010 CONFERENCE • 13-15 OCTOBER
BRISBANE CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

Nurse Leaders – True Gems

Welcome to the 60th Anniversary Conference dinner and thank you for the privilege of speaking to you to-night. This is a night of celebrating 60 years of continuous meetings of Queensland DON's and nurse leaders – something all nurses in Queensland should be proud of.

To-night it is my aim to give you a precise of the Association from its beginnings on 1950 to 2010.

In giving this address, I would like to acknowledge Shelly Nowlan and her committee for inviting me.

I would also like to acknowledge Mr Robert Longhurst who compiled the “Nursing Leadership in Queensland – 50 years of history (1950 -2000)”. This work was authored by him at the request of the DONA Executive in 2000 under the leadership of Catherine James. This publication has been invaluable in compiling this presentation.

I would also like to acknowledge the secretaries of the Association over the past 60 years, who have through their work in the role, kept the history alive.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the work of Kym Volp. Kym has been researching the role of the Nurse Manager in QLD and has utilised the documents of the association, to assist her in this endeavour. Kym has kindly given me some of her findings, particularly in relation to the recommendations from the Conferences and the responses from the Health Department.

The first meeting of a group of Queensland Matrons was held on 2/10/1950. It was noted that “Matrons felt the need of this association; many of them work at long distances & find they have problems which cannot be shared. Hospital Administration these days (1950) is very difficult and problems cannot be solved by any one person.

Has anything changed in 60 years!! QLD DON's still facing the tyranny of distance.

It was eventually agreed to form the Matrons Associations of QLD.

Miss Sorrenson, Moodie and Keenan were elected to a sub-committee to draw up the rules for the Association. Sister Mary Virginia – Mater Hospital –was approached to be on the Committee. The Annual subscription would be 10/6d (\$1.50 approx). The First Conference was planned for April 1951.

Monday 23rd April 1951 – 56 Matron's from across the State attended the first conference at Centaur House, Queen Street Brisbane. The Minister for Health and Home Affairs asked the conference to “suggest to his Department ideas for improving health services in their Hospitals”.

At this first Conference the President Miss S. Keenan (Bundaberg) stated in her report “The Matron of a Hospital has a great responsibility. She must not allow the conditions of life to retard her progress. At times it is not easy to provide and maintain an efficient nursing service for the community, and in addition to her administrative duties, supervise the training of all student



nurses, so that they complete their training with high professional ideals and a sense of their responsibility as a citizen.”

Issues raised at the first Conference included

- Elimination of 5 year training Hospitals
- Selection of one Sister from each Hospital Region for further education as a “Sister Tutor” at the College of Nursing in Melbourne.
- Specialised training schools in regional hospitals in QLD.
- The appointment of a Nurse Advisor to the Department of Health and Home Affairs to advise on matters such as recruitment and standard of living quarters for nurses
- The establishment of an “Auxiliary Service” to be known as hospital aids. These members should be given 12 months training “of an essentially practical nature” and wear an entirely different uniform from that of a nurse.
- It was moved that the Matron of Hospitals of 100 beds and under be paid 10 guineas per week exclusive of board and lodgings.
- Trained nurses to be paid 5 shillings per week for each certificate held with annual increments over 3 years instead of 5.

One motion that failed at the conference was in relation to penalty rates.

“Concern was expressed by a majority of Matrons concerning the anomalies existing in the award, the Sisters and domestic staff receiving a larger salary than the Matron who worked an unlimited number of hours and who had the responsibility of the Hospital.

HAS ANYTHING CHANGED IN 60 YEARS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The Conference in 1951 also included visits to the Mater Hospital and Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital. For many country Matrons this was a rare opportunity to visit the “big smoke”, do a little shopping and dress for the occasion.

HAS ANYTHING CHANGED IN 60 YEARS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

At the second conference in May 1952 the President Miss S Keenan reported that the State Cabinet had approved special payment for Matron’s of Hospitals without any clerical assistance. There had however been little movement on any of the other recommendations of the previous year’s conference.

In researching this paper and reading many, many documents, this became clear to me that very few of the recommendations arising from the Matrons’ Association were readily approved by the



Department. Very courteous letters of response were received from the Health Ministers' of the time – with a “not approved” response.

In 1952 there was a “tirade of complaints from the Matrons”. The Hanlon Government had given its full support to the formation of the Matron's Association presumably assuming that “Matron's would prove to be a conservative body. Less demanding than an overt industrial organisation like the Australian Trained Nurses Association (ATNA).

The Conferences also offered a seemingly receptive arena for the introduction of reform and new ideas. The Department also used the Association as a working tool – in its' first years members were expected to assist in the compilation of the nursing and midwifery curriculum.

One of the 1951 recommendations was for the appointment of a Nurse Advisor. In February 1953 Miss Doris Bardsley was selected a QLD's first Advisor in Nursing.

In 1955 the Matrons Association recommended the appointment of Male Orderlies – “Selected and controlled by the Matron & that training be given to these men”.

The 1956 Conference saw the first mention of the possible training of Male Nurses. This was moved by Miss E Rosin of Gympie Hospital and Seconded by Miss Allen of Oakey Hospital.

Much discussion over the following years surrounded this proposal. Issues raised included the potential dissatisfaction of female nurses with differing rates of pay for males, and whether the male nurses generally would be amenable to the discipline of the ward sister.

In 1956 one of the recommendations from the Conference was “that the Minister arrange for some type of machinery to be attached to our laundries to wash soiled linen and so relieve our nurses from this work.” The Departments response was to request that heavy rubber gloves and overalls be supplied to each hospital for the nurses!!!!

This recommendation was resubmitted over following years and took many years to be implemented – in some hospitals as late as 1971.

Concern was also raised as to the expectation of nurses operating X-Ray machines, with little training and very little in the way of protection from exposure to harmful rays.

In 1957 the Association was assured that “In those Hospitals where the x-ray machine was operated by the Matron and some members of the nursing staff, the machine can be safely operated by any unskilled personnel”.

The Department's impression is “that there are not any special skills in taking x-ray pictures, but skill is required in interpreting the pictures.

Thank goodness things have changed in 60 years!!!!



By the mid to late 50's there was serious discussion in Australian nursing circles of Tertiary education for Nurses. This idea was dismissed by the Queensland Government as being impractical given the particular requirements of the state.

In 1958 the Matrons Conference was told by the newly elected Minister for Health – Dr. HW Noble “that the real nurse should have a mothering instinct. After all nursing in its real sense is mothering. Often the nurses of to-day were too over trained and were too interested in the fluid balance chart of the patient than their comfort”.

The Association found that co-ordinating and continuing the association was difficult in Australia's most decentralised state. The Associations' presidents within the first ten years were based in Bundaberg, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Maryborough and Warwick. With Secretaries and Treasurers similarly dispersed. It is the commitment of these people and members which has enabled the association to continue for its' 60 years.

In the late 50's early 60's a war of words erupted between the RANF and the Matron's Association. The Federation believing “the Matron's Association was a small powerful group obstructing improvements in Nursing Training”.

The new curriculum approved by the Matron's Association in 1961 was criticised as “static, restricting, unbalanced and obsolete.”

However the curriculum was gazetted by the Government in December 1962.

The Minister for Health in 1962 – Mr Gordon Chalk – once again stressed Queensland's special situation in regard to nursing training. “It has come to my knowledge that in some other countries there are highly qualified nurses who do not go near patients. Such an arrangement would be contrary to the outlook and requirements of the State”. SO THERE!!!!

The 60's were to be difficult years in the history of QLD public hospitals. High employment rates, improvement in secondary education, rapid expansion of Tertiary education, all threatened a system of nurse education based upon minimal education qualifications – Grade 8.

What little change there was to the lot of the trainees and qualified nurses in QLD owed a great deal to the annual recommendations from the Matrons Conference.

These “wish lists” were aptly described by Health Minister Douglas Tooth in 1969 as “the blue print of what the senior field workers consider desirable”.

Some of the recommendations of Conferences of the 60's which were approved by the Health Department included –

- That pre washing of foul linen not be the duty of the nurse.



- Training Hospitals should supply text books free of charge to the student nurse.
- The Department supply pre-shrunk ticking covers for rubber mattresses
- The insertion of the patient date of birth instead of age in official records.

One very long and ongoing issue surrounded the categorising of “non-nursing duties”. At the 1965 conference a list of duties was drawn up.

No action what so ever was undertaken by the Department on these recommendations – submitted again in 66 and 67. As late as 1972 no further advice had been received. Ultimately this recommendation was dismissed as “being the responsibility of individual Hospital Boards.

Non-nursing duties – the list may have changed however we are still discussing this issue 38 years on.

HAS ANYTHING CHANGED!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Perhaps one of the most successful recommendations to come from the Matron’s Association conferences in the 1960’s was for the replacement of the State Stores issue crepe toilet paper, the bane of many a nurse’s existence for many years. Few issues ever took up so much time at conferences as did to issue of loo paper.

1967 Conference recommendations to the Minister included among others

- Plastic medicine glasses were proving unsatisfactory
- The training curriculum introduced in Dec. 1962 be reviewed
- That all or portion of Student Nurse Lectures be given in the employers’ time.
- That all Hospital secretaries be required to supply the Matron with a copy of the current Nurses Award, Hospital Acts and Regulations.
- A pool of trained nurses for QLD is established.

Re the pool of trained nurses for QLD – it took until early 2000 to achieve this objective – more than 33 years.

How times have changed – in 1967 – thanks was given at this conference to commercial sponsors – WD&HO Wills for the cigarettes supplied to the Matrons and to Nescafe for the Nescafe for the Matron’s use!!!!

Thus began to the involvement of companies in sponsoring the Conference. In 1968 the Milton Company provided the first “Conference Brief Cases”.



I will say at this stage that the thanks and appreciation of the current Association goes to the Companies who provide the Trade Displays year upon year for the past 43 years. Your involvement and support of nursing in Queensland is greatly appreciated.

1969 saw “thinly disguised signs of frustration” amongst Matrons with the Health Department’s continuing lack of concern for future planning – apart from bandaid measures – the unsuccessful regional training scheme and the training of Nurse Aids.

The Matrons Association Secretary – Miss Lewis - Toowoomba General Hospital, on behalf of members wrote to the Department to advise the QLD Matrons concern “as to the Departmental Policy concerning the future of nursing services and nurse training in QLD public hospitals”

At that year’s conference the Under-secretary – Dept. Of Health, addressed the gathering and stressed the need for team work on Hospital administration.

In the early 70’s conference recommendations moved from toilet paper, sputum mugs and garbags to a focus on the future of the nursing profession in QLD.

1970 Conference recommended

- the closure of Nursing Training Schools with a daily average of less than 30 students
- Minimum age entry of 17 years

1971 Conference recommended

- An increase in Nursing Staff at all levels to enable the provision of adequate nursing services.
- The staff establishment of Tutor Sisters is increased to reduce their workload.
- Preliminary nursing course students are super nummary in all training schools.

1971 also saw a landmark recommendation that

- A committee is set up to consider the desirability of establishing college or other tertiary type education for basic nursing training and make recommendations regarding this.

This was rejected by Mr Tooth – “Officers of the Department have been for some time enquiring into this matter At this stage it is too early to indicate any positive results of these deliberations – but you will be kept informed of any developments.”

The release of the “Saint Report” (Commissioned by the RANF) which showed the dire state and questionable future of nurse education in QLD vindicated the Matron’s concerns.



The 1973 Conference made formal recommendations for the upgrading of nursing education in QLD. Matrons were well aware of the impact of any change and they called for constructive and sound planning to ensure continuing patient care and adequate staffing.

During the 70's the Matrons continued to convince the Minister and the Department of the need for new equipment and clinical supplies. Including the replacement of woollen with cotton blankets, disposable theatre caps – though disposable face masks were not approved.

1977 saw a recommendation approved for the supply of variable height beds.

1975 saw the 25 year anniversary celebrations of the Association. The President Miss E. Welsh (Redcliffe Hospital) stated some of the greatest achievements are

- The creation of the Division of Nursing in the Department
- The appointment of an advisor in nursing.
- Elimination of 5 year training schools
- Training for male nurses
- Introduction of Nurse Aide training
- Lectures given in Hospital time.

1974 saw an innovation of “Male Matrons” for the first time. Matrons were no longer Matrons – the 1974 Nursing Award now designates them as Nursing Superintendents.

The Association changed its name to The QLD Nursing Superintendents Association at the 1975 Conference.

The late 70's saw changes and progress for nursing in QLD.

- 1975 – Supply of audio-visual equipment for education – approved
- 1976 – Employment of Ward Receptionists – approved
- 1978 – Revision of nursing staff establishments is reviewed on the basis of patient / nurse dependency. An application for a Federal Government grant was submitted by the Department for a research project into PND and Public Hospitals.

In 1979 the Association agreed to allow delegates from the Private Sector to attend as observers.

1979 also saw a move from the traditional Health Department and Medical Officer addresses to conference delegates, to QLD and Interstate and other Nurses addressing the Conference.

No other event symbolized the changing times for nursing than was the demotion of Miss Elizabeth Anne Abell – Nursing Superintendent RBH in 1979. Following court proceedings, media attention and public outcry Miss Abell was reinstated.



Two years later she was appointed as the first Director of the Division of Nursing – QLD Department of Health.

THE POWER OF THE PROFESSION AND THE COMMUNITY WAS RECOGNISED!!!

The 80's proved to be a decade of rapid change in both technical and clinical aspects of nursing practice.

The move of education qualifications of nurses from Grade 8 education to entrants competent in maths and science was a revolution in itself. Nursing Superintendents were at the forefront of change – bearing the responsibility of planning for the future and now accepting unprecedented responsibilities for financial management of nursing resources and services.

1983 saw a move to a “professional nursing conference”. For the first time the conference was held outside of a Hospital – at the Bardon Professional Centre. This offered more scope for trade displays of supplies and equipment, welcomed particularly by the Regional and Rural Hospital attendees.

In 1987 the conference moved to the Gateway Hotel North Quay – mainly due to the lack of accommodation at the Bardon Centre. In 1990 the Conference was held in Cairns.

The future direction of the profession tended to dominate the conference through these years. An impasse had developed between the Federal and State Governments regarding the formal transition to tertiary nurse education in QLD.

In 1981 a recommendation was submitted that -

- All RN and EN staff be allowed 80 hours each year for orientation and in-service.

The reply from Brian Austin – Health Minister – stated “I consider that nursing professionals have a personal responsibility in regard to keeping up to date as indeed have other professionals.” Not approved.

Other recommendations from this conference received remarkably positive responses.

- That retrieval teams from Metropolitan Hospitals attend emergency situations in country areas through the State (State Committee formed to consider)
- Concern expressed over the nursing care of the mentally ill and the accommodation available to them. (Approaches through Hospital Boards with submissions for funding to the Department)



- 80 hours orientation is available for Nursing Superintendents appointed to country hospitals and outpatients centres before taking up their positions. (Accepted that this is desirable)
- Where a Nursing Superintendent believes there is a need for a staff member to attend in-service in a particular speciality which is not available at a Regional Base Hospital, provision be made for the staff member to attend in-service at a hospital or health agency where such speciality is available. (I wish to advise that in special circumstances, approval is given for staff members to attend such in-service training)
- Recommendation that the Division of Health Education be developed as a resource centre for nurse education material. (I wish to advise that agreement was reached that the Division should take advantage of the expertise from the Board of Nursing Studies.)
- SARAS currently available to Public Servants and certain Hospital personnel should be extended to full time nursing staff in Public Hospitals. (You would be aware that Hospital Boards have been acquainted with the decision to extend SARAS to Nurses.)

At the 1982 Conference Brian Austin Health minister stated “Nursing Superintendents be involved in the management and budgeting arrangements of the Hospitals. This was perceived as being a necessary adjunct to the role of the Nursing Superintendent as part of the tripartite management team of the Hospital.

1989 – Approval for the payment of a clerical allowance for Nursing Superintendents without clerical support.

Repeated calls for “On call Allowance” for Nursing Superintendents was again rejected.

1983 Conference resolution urged the State Government to “introduce legislation to ban public advertising of cigarettes and consider banning the sale of 'cigarette look alike confectionary'".

REJECTED

1987 saw the impact of the AIDS Epidemic become a conference concern.

Recommendations were made –

- Hospices be established for terminal AIDS sufferers, staffed by qualified nurses
- Mouth to mouth resuscitation be policy for nursing staff and that standard and sufficient masks be provided to hospitals
- Human relationship courses are compulsory in all schools, these courses to include sex education, STD’s and AIDS and be conducted by suitably qualified professionals.
- Condoms made readily available to assist in the prevention and spread of AIDS
- Approval for selective screening for AIDS



- That the public education campaign to raise awareness of AIDS be continued.

A further resolution from the 1988 conference urged that nursing staff be informed of the HIV Status of patients in their care.

After many years of discussion and recommendations, the establishment of the first post basic nursing course – Diploma Applied Science (Nursing) at QUT in 1982 and the support of the Premier J.B Peterson for the introduction of a second course at James Cook University in Townsville was a major victory for the work of the Association.

However concern was still held for the transfer of all nurse education to the Tertiary sector.

It was not until 1988 that a decision was finally made by the Ahearn Government to progressively phase out hospital training. The Conference expressed its' enthusiasm and commitment to the move.

1990's saw the Association's name again change to the Director's of Nursing Association (DONA).

One of the main achievements of the Association over the past years was the formation of the Director of Nursing position within the Health Department.

It was no wonder that the DON's took a decidedly hostile position when full scale reorganisation of the State's Health Service into Health Regions was unveiled. The proposal included abolishing the Chief Nurse Position the Department and the apparent downgrading of professional representation within Policy and Planning in the Department.

DONA Executive was given an opportunity in April 1990 to discuss the Green Paper on organisational arrangements for QLD public health services. Concern was expressed that with the proposed structure "direct contact that DON's have had with the Chief Nursing Officer and Assistant CNO for matters of advice had been removed".

In December 1990 the Executive formally approached the Minister for Health (Mr KV McGellgiott) to express their concern that the position of Chief Nursing Officer was not included in the proposed restructure.

Executive then requested all DON's to give their active support in lobbying against this move – expressing grave concern for the future of nursing. A direct appeal was also made to the Premier – Mr Wayne Goss. The QNU also joined the fray.

There was growing perception that "anyone could manage nurses and nursing service delivery".

By the April 1991 conference – this issue was high on the agenda and tempers were frayed due to the lack of political and beauracracic response to DONA's concerns.



Dr Peter Stanley spoke on regionalisation. The Chief Nurse was scheduled to speak on the following day – however this did not happen as the position had been arbitrarily sacrificed as part of the Government's new health structure.

That same day the conference issued a press release giving the “Minister for Health and Under Secretary 24 hours to address the recent decision to abolish the senior nursing position”.

In his refusal to attend the meeting the Minister Mr McGelligott not only expressed his indignation at the DON's actions, he also reminded the DON's that “they were public sector workers and were subject to the code of conduct that limited public comment on departmental issues.” There were hints of disciplinary action and insistence upon further support from the DON's.

The DON's response was unprecedented. They issued another press release, expressing concerns “as the result of the abolition of the State's CNO position, the Government plan for restructuring of the administration of nursing services, no nursing representation on the QLD Health Council and lack of consultation with credible nurses on this issue.”

The 150 delegates then caught Taxis' into the city and proceeded to march down George Street towards Parliament House.

DON's carried signs, some of which read – Please Wayne no pain – Patient Care in Jeopardy – Matrons' jobs at risk.

This was a radical step for an organisation better known for its conservatism.

The march was reported widely on television news. However, the Courier Mail reported the march as a one sentence paragraph on page 4 on the following day.

“Nurse Protest – More than 150 QLD nurses marched on Parliament House in George Street yesterday to protest against changes to senior nursing positions”

INTERESTING!!

Five days after the march on Parliament the Health Minister attended a meeting of the Nursing Consultative Committee. The committee membership included the QNU and the meeting was attended by Joan Mackie – President of DONA and was chaired by Val Coughlin-West (former president of DONA).

The Minister advised the meeting of his intention to review the operation of the consultative committee to “make it a more effective forum – with the aim of upgrading its status – given the restructuring of the Department and the loss of the CNO.

At the 1992 conference the DON's again criticized the loss of the CNO – declaring that neither the new Nurse Manager QLD Health nor the Nursing Consultative Committee gave the profession the recognition it had enjoyed between 1981 and 1990.



The 90's was a decade of rapid change in the Nation both socially and politically and in economic development.

There were also issues of generational change, as younger, more highly educated and better paid nurses, both men and women were entering the administrative ranks of the nursing profession.

Dominating the issues for health was the realities of an aging population, changing technologies, growing public expectation of health care delivery and close media scrutiny of health care delivery and of course budget management in an era of escalating costs.

The events of 1991 focussed a light on the role of the annual conference and the Association. It had long since lost its role as a forum for recommendations to the Department of Health. It now received no direct Government funding. There was felt a need to form an Incorporated Association.

In April 1993 formal approval was sought for the incorporation of DONA.

As an incorporated body the Association elected a new Executive at the Conference in May 1993.

President Dianna Kenrick, Vice President Joan Mackie, Secretary Vera Nord and Treasurer Maree Rankin.

The Association received its official certification on 25/6/1993.

The AIMS were to –

1. Provide an opportunity for QLD DON's to discuss nursing and health issues.
2. Clinical Practice
3. Education and Staff Development
4. Management
5. Research

The 1994 conference was held in Townsville with the utilisation of a professional conference organiser.

The Organisation's independent status saw media releases relating to staffing issues in Regional hospitals, and perceived threats to the status of some rural DON's.

The Minister for Health – Ken Hayward arrived in Townsville to the local paper headlines – “Nurses fight budget cutbacks” (Townsville Hospital were on a work to rule because of budget issues).

The next day the Courier Mail reported on the conference and concerns expressed by the delegates regarding staffing shortages.



It is perceived that then and following media articles influenced the Minister's decision to hold bi-monthly meetings with the Associations Management Committee.

DONA was now represented on

- QNC
- QLD Case mix Consultation Committee
- Health Workforce Planning Committee
- Nurse Labour force Reference Group

The Association was also involved in the final stages of the QLD Nursing Career Structure.

Under the leadership of Dianna Kenrick and Joan Mackie the Association continued to lobby for the re-establishment of a Division of Nursing within QLD Health. The Appointment of Sue Norrie as Principle Nurse Advisor in 1996 was therefore regarded somewhat as a victory for the Association.

DONA continued to expand in the late 90's. Planning days were held twice a year, a regular newsletter was commenced. Project teams were established covering special interests, mentoring, conference team and for the development of position statements on key policy issues.

The scope of the Association also changed with the acceptance of Assistance Director's of Nursing (ADON) membership in 1988 and in 1999 the invitation to DON's in the Private Sector to become members.

By 1999 the Associations Mission Statement was

"To influence professional and policy direction for health services in QLD."

The objectives were to

- Provide professional development activities for DON's
- Provide a forum to influence health care policy
- Develop a definitive and cohesive approach on health and nursing
- Enhance the professional status of nursing
- Provide leadership to the profession in pursuit of excellence in health care, in a dynamic and complex environment.

2000 saw the DONA Celebrate 50 years of continuous representation for Directors of Nursing and nurses in Queensland. This is a unique milestone in nursing in Australia.

This milestone saw the publication of a History of Nursing Leadership in Queensland. Great work by Robert Longhurst in documenting and cataloguing this history.



The last decade has again seen the Association move with the change in the nursing profession and health service delivery in QLD.

The changed career structure in QLD Health included in management and leadership roles for NUM's, CNC's Educators as well as Nursing Directors, Assistant Directors of Nursing and Directors of Nursing.

The Association became increasingly aware of the need to support these nurses if we were to continue to be seen as relevant in the management of Health Services. It was recognised that the Association with its 50 years of history had a role to play in the development and support of our future nurse leaders.

In 2002 the President Ms Irene Lake (Mater Public Brisbane) stated in her report that

“During the past year the committee continued to address the objectives of the association, with a reasonable degree of success, while at the same time determining the position the association needs to consider, in order to ensure we are viewed as a significant stakeholder and contributor to the future direction of health care in QLD. Over the past 51 years the Association has strengthened and embarked on new directions, however, the committee believes the Association has reached a plateau.

If we are serious about the continued growth of the Association, and our place of influence in the future direction of health care, the Committee believes considerable debate needs to occur”.

In 2002 the membership of the Association had dropped to below 100 and this rang alarm bells for the future of the Association.

A motion put to the AGM which was supported read

“A review of the purpose, objectives, and model rules of the Association is undertaken in consultation with the membership, to reflect a contemporary nursing professional Association that is positioned for the future.”

Despite the declining membership, the President noted, the Association had representatives on a number of committees including

- The Ministerial Taskforce Implementation Group for Nursing Recruitment and Retention
- The Advisory Committee for the Queensland Centre for Evidence Based Nursing and Midwifery
- Two representatives on the Rural Health advisory Council
- QNC Council
- QNC Committee progressing 'on line' access to the nursing register



- A representative attended a meeting with the QNC to discuss the National Competition Policy
- And although not strictly DONA, two committee members were engaged in the process of examining the employment of student nurses.

This was also the year that the DONA Executive recognised the need to support future nurse leaders. A reduced conference registration cost was made available to Level 3 Nurses and day registration was also offered.

The September 2003 AGM was the watershed for change to an Association which was now 53 years old.

A discussion paper had been circulated to members prior to the AGM in relation to a proposed change of direction for the Association.

Issues raised by members included –

- What is the future of DONA – it is not viewed as a peak nursing organisation
- Need to have an organisation which expands into the private sector.
- As an organisation with public private membership – can only lobby the Health Minister – cannot make representation to QLD Health.
- Maybe need to open up to all levels of nursing
- Link to ACHSE or RCNA
- DONA needs to be more active – many members believe the only benefit is the yearly conference.

The AGM attendees agreed that in order to remain a voice for nursing in QLD, the association needed to expand its membership and change some of the Aims of the Association.

Much discussion surrounded the name change to recognise the changing roles of the Association that was to focus on nursing leadership, rather than focussing on DON membership.

The current name Association of QLD Nurse Leaders (AQNL) was ultimately chosen as the new name and indicated a new direction for the Association.

2003 was another milestone in the history of the Association – the election of a male nurse Ross MacDonald (Nambour Hospital) as the president and Graham Wilkinson (Ipswich Hospital) as the vice President.

Paul Kachel (Gold Coast) had been the Treasurer in 1999.



The Association has continued to grow and evolve through the decade. The launch of the AQNL website, the development of membership data bases, on line membership and conference registration have all contributed to the growth and professionalism of the Association.

The instigation of Regional events has also been well received by membership. Events have been held across the State over the past 5 years.

In 2007 the Health Minister announced that AQNL had been given a grant to develop a framework for effectively supporting and growing the future nurse leaders in QLD. This was an opportunity to continue to promote and evolve the Association as a responsible voice for nursing leadership in QLD.

The Association also launched

- The AQNL Annual Conference Best Paper Award
- The AQNL Emerging Nurse Leader Award

The Mentoring Framework and Toolkit for Aspiring Nurse Leaders was launched at the Associations 2008 Annual Conference.

With the changed focus of the Association the membership had grown to over 200 by June 2008, demonstrating the significance of the Association with members coming from a diverse range of professionals across the public, private and tertiary sectors.

In 2008 the Association also launched the Outstanding Leadership in Nursing award. The award recognises outstanding contribution and leadership by an individual or group of individuals.

I was proud and humbled to be the first recipient of this award. Thank you AQNL for this recognition.

The Association continues to ensure it is a voice for nurse leaders in regard to political and professional issues with the President and Vice President invited to meet with the Director General of QLD Health and the Chief Nursing Officer – Ms Pauline Ross.

AQNL events continue to be held across the State in both the Public and Private Sectors.

The organisation is now celebrating its 60th birthday. What an achievement for nurses in QLD. From humble beginnings in 1950 with Miss S Keenan as President and a membership with vision for an Association to support Matrons across this vast State, to to-days Association and the professional association it is, is a credit to all nurses who have been members over the 60 years.

CONGRATULATIONS to ALL OF US!!!!



Again I thank the executive committee and in particular President Shelly, for the request for me to speak with you tonight. Originally I thought “that’s OK – happy to do that!” However when I started to research the history I was almost overwhelmed with the task ahead of me.

I hope you have enjoyed my walk through the years – HAPPY 60th BIRTHDAY AQNL!!!!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- AQNL Executive – President Shelley Nowlan
- Mr Robert Longhurst – Author of “ Nursing Leadership in Queensland – 50 Years of History – (1950 – 2000)”
- Association Secretaries over the past 60 years
- Ms Kym Volp