

18/04/11



RE THE AUSTRALIAN HEALTH PRACTITIONER REGULATION AGENCY

To the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee,

Being among the first new graduate nurses to apply to AHPRA for a nurse's license in July 2010, I would like to detail my experience to you.

I was lucky enough to gain employment with Queensland health as a graduate RN. My employment was due to commence on August 23rd 2010. But with the new national licensing due to commence on July 1st I could not apply before this date. I tried to find out as much information as I could to aid my application but the AHPRA website was not very informative. Even the application form was not easy to find and did not exactly apply to a new graduate nurse.

I contacted AHPRA at the beginning of July to find out exactly the requirements I would need to apply for a licence. I was told that I would need to take the English language test as I had not completed my high schooling in Australia. Even though, I was born in England and my first language is English and my parents are both English.

Knowing that I was on a time limit at this stage, I quickly searched the internet to find an approved course. I was told that I had to take the academic version which was much harder than the other version. Some tests were conducted on the Gold Coast, this was the closest for me. But the dates were not suitable for me receiving the results in time to send to AHPRA. So I enrolled at the Sunshine Coast location (This would involve a 6 hour round trip). I had booked a holiday in New Zealand so had to conduct correspondence via email during this time. Which in itself was stressful and I couldn't fully relax and enjoy my holiday. If they were fully booked at the sunshine coast, the other dates would be too late for AHPRA to receive my results in time. They finally contacted me to say that the sunshine coast was fully booked but they had opened up extra dates at the Brisbane location.

I had to travel up to Brisbane on 2 consecutive days to complete the test. The whole experience was very stressful and inconvenient. I knew that I had to gain a grade 7 or above for AHPRA. Otherwise I would not be able to acquire a nurse's licence and therefore would be able to commence employment with Queensland Health. The weight of this was almost too much to bear, a great deal was relying on this test. Partly because of the stress, I felt the test was harder than anything that I had to complete at university. I had 13 agonising days to wait for the results. Fortunately, my results were suitable for AHPRA. In the end it turned out that I did not need to take the English Language test after all.

Another factor of the application process was the amount of fees to be paid. This was unclear and after more phone calls, I ended up sending in more money than was needed. I did receive a refund. I then had another agonising wait for my licence to come through not knowing if it would arrive in time for my start date with Queensland Health. I attempted to make several phone calls to find out how my application was processing as they were not answering my emails, these were met with vague comments. I received a phone call a week before I was due to start, stating that I was now registered and could commence

employment as a registered nurse. I was told I could check on their website to confirm this. I did not receive any paperwork until several months afterwards.

Even though I was able to commence employment on the expected date. My whole experience with AHPRA could have been avoided if a) the appropriate people had been fully informed when giving out details on behalf of AHPRA b) the website had been set up with adequate information weeks before the commencement of national licensing, so that future nurses were kept fully informed of the criteria they needed to complete an application.

Is it too much to ask that we receive an AHPRA badge? AHPRA have said they will not be issuing any. All nurses in previous years received a badge when they first gained their licence which they could wear proudly and show off what they had achieved. It is very sad that all new nurses now will not have this choice.

My experience with AHPRA has been very disappointing. By writing this letter, hopefully future nurses will not have to encounter the same stress and frustrations that I have encountered.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.