

TASKFORCESUBMISSION: submission

NAME: Carole Rushton

POSITION:

ORGANISATION:

SUBMISSION1: My story.

Tucked away in my basement is a dusty old certificate boasting a once coveted qualification – “Advanced Diploma in Community Health”. 15 years ago I trained as a Community Health Nurse. This somewhat generic title encompassed the broad range contexts and health promoting activities carried out by appropriately trained nurses working with individuals, groups and whole communities toward their better health. Community Nurses were the embodiment of “think global act local” (in relation to health). Since completing my training I have seen this role eroded, subjugated to the needs and interests of doctors, colonised by other professional groups or worse disappear altogether. This was perhaps made possible by the inability of this group of nurses to adequately satisfy their masters in describing exactly what is was they did or how effective they were at doing it! More recently, I have worked somewhat unhappily as a Practice Nurse, the only role available to me which enabled me to draw on my eclectic nursing background and training and, to fulfil my passion for health promotion. In this role my functioning was all too often reduced to that of “doctors hand maiden” and illness orientated activities rather than prevention. Poor pay and conditions also made this role unattractive. Health promoting activities such as community development, for example, working with the local community to establish a hydrotherapy group for women with weight, isolation and mobility issues were carried out in my own time, using my own resources because these activities are not supported structurally nor financially within the general practice setting. I did run a Well Women’s Clinic in a general practice which was “successful”; although its operation was severely constrained by inadequate infrastructure. I now do not work as a nurse at all and am sad about this. While recent directions toward “Super Clinics” brings new hope, the role of Practice Nurse requires urgent attention and numerous reports exist which highlight the issues impacting on this group. They are after all, the “new” Community Health Nurses with their potential in preventative health yet to be realised.

PRIVACY: yes

SUBMIT: Submit