



Medals for Nurses
PO Box 1157
KELMSCOTT DC WA 6997
Telephone: (08) 9390 8572
Mobile: 043 828 9380

Your ref: Petition No. 106

Hon Colin Holt MLC
Deputy Chair
Legislative Council Committee Office
Parliament House,
4 Harvest Terrace,
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Sir

PETITION NO. 106 – NURSING SERVICE MEDALS

Thank you for the opportunity to make a written submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs in support of Petition No. 106 – Nursing Service Medals.

Please find the submission attached.

Yours sincerely

Paul Walling
COORDINATOR
MEDALS FOR NURSES

19 March 2019

Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Honourable Swinbourn MLC

Petition No: 106 Nursing Service Medals

The goal of this petition is to recognise Nurses and Midwives for their service to the community; by the Community and by the Western Australia Government in a meaningful way, similar to other public officers.

We acknowledge several hospitals issue awards to Nurses who have been working within that hospital for ten years, but not all hospitals do this, and it does not include service in other parts of the State or hospitals. One Nurse, at the Armadale Health Service, after 38 years of service only ever received a 15 year acknowledgement at that hospital. On retirement, she received no recognition at all from the hospital or its management.

Nurses get very little recognition for the work they undertake serving the community, often in a demanding environment. There would be few nurses who have not been assaulted in the course of their careers, either physically or verbally by patients, patient family members or members of the community. Still with all that, members of the public rely heavily on their services.

Nursing is both an essential and emergency service and are the back bone of the WA Health Department and yet when compared with other services get little recognition.

Ambulance Officers (Voluntary and Paid), SES (Voluntary and Paid), Department of Fire and Emergency (Voluntary and Paid), Corrective Services and even voluntary service such as Royal Life Saving and other search and rescue groups all receive medals either at a national level or locally.

If you compare Nursing with the WA Police Force, a police officer can be awarded four national medals, also there are four State medals they can receive:

Cross for Bravery - Awarded to Western Australia Police Personnel for an act of most conspicuous courage whereby the person placed them self at peril and risk of significant personal injury or death. In February recent information was tabled in Parliament, showed that over 800 nurses had been assaulted in the first 6 months of 2017. Why aren't nurses acknowledge for their bravery? We are told that they are awarded by the Nation Bravery Medal, surely police are covered by this award as well and yet they also have their own?

Western Australia Police Star - Awarded to recognise Western Australia Police Personnel who are killed or seriously injured whilst carrying out their primary functions on or off duty, a recent article in the WA Today had Rodger Cook saying that the treatment of nurses was unacceptable. In the last budget, the Government allocated \$2.2 million to safety equipment for health workers. When a Nurse is hurt on duty, and can't work, generally they feel unsupported by their hospital (emotionally) and if they are unable to return to work are separated from their employment and they feel casted off.

Western Australia Police Medal - Initial awarding of the medal will occur following 10 years of service and then complemented by further recognition at 5 year increments up to and including 50 years of service. We believe that like police, Nurses should be recognised by the State Government in the same manner. Nurses are told that they are important and respected

and yet they are not recognised like the police. The words are there but the action is missing. On the 27 January 2016, Roger Cook, did a press release on Perth Now, titled: Honour WA's nurses and midwives to boost recruitment and retention, where he supported the concept of Nurses being nationally recognized with a medal. He also stated that "it's time we took this small step to publicly celebrate nurses". 12 months later when he became the Health Minister and had the opportunity to recognise Nurses for their service in WA, he then fell back on the argument that there were enough awards out there for Nurses. Which is the same for Police Officers, but the Government supports them getting Police State Medals in addition.

In addition there is the **Commissioners' Medal for Excellence** and the **Western Australia Police Cadet Medal**.

In 2005, a Victorian taskforce submitted a report on violence in nursing and found that exposure to violence has been seen as a fact of life by nurses. "Nurses have been identified as the occupational group most at risk of violence in the workplace in Australia" (Mayhew 2000). "Recent Australian research indicates that as many as 95 per cent of nurse respondents had experienced repeated episodes of verbal aggression in the year prior to the study, with 80 per cent reporting multiple episodes of physical aggression from patients" (O'Connell et al. 2000).

Every week Nurses do many hours of unpaid overtime because it is expected of them by management; all we are asking is for a \$18 medal after 10 years to say thank you. Is that too much to ask from the Western Australia Community who they serve?

When future generations, look at the medals their grandparent received, they can take pride in what their ancestral line achieved for and in the community in which they live, and that the community appreciated their contribution.

In 2017 Medals for Nurses had 500 medals produce, privately funded, and to date have presented 320 (13817 Combined years of nursing service) over 8 presentation with another 107 medals allocated and awaiting presentation. The reaction from the recipients was electrifying and very moving at being recognised for their service. This could be confirmed by our presenters: Tony Buti, Don Punch, Michael Murray, Simon Millman, and Martin Pritchard.

In addition to the petition, the Health Minister's Office has received 1610 letters from Nurses and community members requesting that the Health Minister implement a Western Australia Nurses Service Medal.

We would ask, that as our elected representatives; that you support the introduction of a service medal to be presented to Nurses after ten years of Nursing service in WA, with a bar or clasp for each subsequent five years of service.

While officers (Nurses) don't seek acknowledgment for the work they carry out, that doesn't take away the need to recognise their service.

(Deputy Commissioner Dawson of the Western Australia Police, Aug 2013)

Thank you for the opportunity to raise these issues and I am happy to be contacted or be given the opportunity to discuss the matter further at any time

Yours Sincerely

Paul Walling

EN. GradCertBus NDA, B.Hlth Sc ECowa. Dip. Man., Dip. Qual Audit.,