

from the PRESIDENT



Susie Kong
CNF President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Kong', with a stylized flourish at the end.

The CNF is facing some significant challenges at the moment. Many of you will be aware that the Commonwealth Secretariat, the administrative arm for the Commonwealth, proposed in their new strategic plan, that health and education would no longer be areas of work that the Commonwealth Secretariat would be involved in.

This is particularly concerning when the health statistics from the majority of Commonwealth countries are consistently poorer than those of the rest of the world and when Commonwealth countries are struggling to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In the strategic plan discussion paper, the Commonwealth Secretariat states their work will be based around the two pillars of democracy and development, however you cannot achieve either democracy or development with an unhealthy population. Good health is the fundamental foundation on which democracy and development is built.

Rather than abrogate its responsibility for health and education, the Commonwealth Secretariat should be leading the way in promoting universal access to health care, as well as a primary health care approach to preventing ill health; health screening; early intervention; affordable health; and equity in access to health care. The Commonwealth Secretariat should be leading the way and initiating discussion with member states about global goals post the MDGs and using the unique opportunity the Commonwealth provides to influence the global health and development agenda.

The Health Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat has, in the past, made a significant contribution to addressing health issues. It was the Health Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat that initiated the development of the *Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers* and it was the lobbying of the Health Section which resulted in the World Health Organisation *Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health personnel*.

The Health Section also initiated the highly successful African Regulatory Collaborative to improve standards and regulation in the east, central and southern Africa region.

Working together, there are so many positive things to be achieved between the CNF and the Commonwealth Secretariat. There is an opportunity for using the CNF networks for valuable data collection about the nursing and midwifery workforce. The Commonwealth Steering Committee for Nursing and Midwifery which has so much potential to coordinate nursing and midwifery across the Commonwealth and provide input to Commonwealth Health Ministers on nursing and midwifery issues has not met for several years. The CNF has made submissions to the Commonwealth Secretariat to review its position on health however without a change in position; the CNF will be severely affected.

As significant an impact for the CNF is the decision of the Commonwealth Foundation to cancel its annual funding grant to Commonwealth accredited civil society organisations. The CNF has relied on this annual grant for many years to fund its administration and many of its projects. Instead, the Commonwealth Foundation expects small associations like the CNF to compete for funding with other larger international NGOs. The Commonwealth Foundation proudly boasted that their last 'call for expressions of interest' attracted 600 applications. At a time when many people in the Commonwealth are questioning its relevance, the decision to abandon organisations that have committed themselves to Commonwealth principles and values by seeking Commonwealth accreditation is very hard to understand and very disappointing.

On a very positive note, the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) has made a decision to rejoin the CNF. This is wonderful news. The CNA has in the past provided CNF Presidents and Board members and we have missed their valuable input, knowledge and expertise.

Make a note in your diary for the 2nd Commonwealth Nurses Conference in London 8-9 March 2014 (see back page). The Inaugural Commonwealth Nurses Conference was a great event with wonderful papers and even more wonderful networking. The 2nd Commonwealth Nurses Conference will be even better. Make sure you plan to be there.