

**Submission to the National Quality and Safety Accreditation Standards review.  
Nurse Policy Branch, Department of Human Services, Victoria (March 2007)**

**Introduction**

Whilst it is recognised that the Department of Human Services Victoria has contributed to the stakeholder consultation for the Australian Council of Healthcare Standards review in a broad sense, the Nurse Policy Branch of the department seeks only to comment on one of the questions posed in the review. The question: "What Priority areas should be included in core safety standards?" provides an opportunity for the Nurse Policy Branch to give comment and provide input into this review regarding the work undertaken by the branch on the Victorian Taskforce on Violence in Nursing. This submission, whilst it is very specific in its recommendation is consistent with the aim of the review, which is to generate discussion on the need for, and contents of, a set of core safety and quality standards broadly applicable across the health sector.

**Background.**

An emerging global trend in the health care industry is the increasing incidence of occupational violence and bullying within the workplace. Those involved in direct clinical care and who are in frequent contact with the public are increasingly confronted with incidence of occupational violence and bullying. As nurses make up a significant proportion of the health care workforce, the Victorian government established the "Victorian Taskforce on Violence in Nursing" to examine key issues and recommend specific strategies to address occupational violence and bullying against nurses. The ministerial taskforce brought together government, industrial, regulatory, health service and clinical nursing representation to consider this important issue. The aim of the taskforce was to provide strategic advice regarding violence and bullying in the workplace directed towards nurses and develop strategies to reduce its occurrence and to promote nurses' safety. The taskforce made 29 recommendations aimed at addressing the problem of violence and bullying against nurses in a more consistent and co-ordinated manner. The recommendations have been accepted and this project will include the implementation of the recommendations. The implementation will be undertaken in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including WorkSafe, the Department of Justice and health services. A copy of the report can be viewed at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing/promoting/noviolence.htm>.

A key deliverable of the Victorian Taskforce on Violence in Nursing was to establish mechanisms that promote monitoring and evaluation of strategies to prevent and reduce occupational violence. Key objectives included developing a reporting framework for use by health services and education providers that:

- Facilitates consistent statewide reporting of incidents and potential incidents of occupational violence and bullying.
- Facilitates standardised data collection and analysis of incidents of occupational violence and bullying.
- Provides a mechanism to monitor the impact of strategies to prevent and manage incidents of occupational violence and bullying

The taskforce made recommendations in relation to monitoring and evaluation. The recommendations included the development of a state wide minimum data set that includes key critical fields and the development of guidelines to assist health services to understand the significance of data collection related to critical field information. The Department will then be able to make aggregated local data results available to health services and the Victorian Workcover Authority to compare local prevalence and nature of events to enable state-wide benchmarking.

**What priority areas should be included in core safety standards?**

It is vital that information acquired from accreditation should be used for system wide improvements. Currently, the safety management systems (standard 3.2.1) component of the Equip accreditation standards includes a requirement for health services to collect data in relation to manual handling, radiations safety management, hazard identification systems and hazardous substances.

We believe that this standard would benefit from the inclusion of a requirement to collect data in relation to the incidence of violence and bullying in health services. This inclusion will provide a consistent approach to reporting and monitoring systems regarding violence, which is a critical issue in all health services.