

# **A Critical Ethnography of the Transition Experiences of Newly Endorsed Nurse Practitioners in Australia**

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RN MN MNP

A thesis submitted to fulfil the requirements of a

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## *DEDICATION*

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Laura and Monte Bell, who sacrificed so much to give me the education they never had themselves. I wish they were here to share this milestone.

## ***STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY***

### **STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Thesis by Publication Refer to Rule 53 of the Rules Governing Research Higher Degrees.

I hereby certify that this thesis is submitted in the form of a series of published papers of which I am a joint author. I have included as part of the thesis a written statement from each co-author; and endorsed by Professor Robert Callister, the Faculty Assistant Dean (Research) attesting to my contribution to the joint publications. I have renumbered sections of submitted or published papers in order to generate a consistent presentation in the thesis.

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**STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION BY OTHERS**

We **ISABEL HIGGINS** and **TRACY LEVETT-JONES** attest that Research Higher Degrees candidate **LORNA MACLELLAN** was the principal contributor to the conception, design, writing and revision of the paper/publication:

**MacLellan, L.,** Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T. (2015). Medical Acceptance of the Nurse Practitioner Role in Australia: A Decade on. *The Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners* 27(3),152-159 March. DOI: 10.1002/2327-6924.12141 Article first published online:4 JUN 2014.

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**MacLellan, L.,** Levett-Jones, T., Higgins, I., (2015). Nurse Practitioner Role Transition: A Concept Analysis. *The Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*. 27(7), 389-397 July. DOI: 10.1002/2327-6924.12165. Article first published online: 4 SEP 2014

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**MacLellan, L.,** Levett-Jones, T., Higgins, I., (2016). The Enemy Within: Power and Politics in the Transition to Nurse Practitioner. *NursingPlus Open*, 1-7.  
DOI: 10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.003. Article first published on line: 21 FEB2016

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**MacLellan, L., Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T.** An exploration of the factors that influence nurse practitioner transition in Australia: A story of turmoil, tenacity and triumph. Manuscript submitted to *The Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners* March 2016. Manuscript under Review.

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## ***PUBLICATIONS FROM THIS THESIS***

**MacLellan, L.,** Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T. (2015). Medical Acceptance of the Nurse Practitioner Role in Australia: A Decade on. *The Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, 27(3), 152-159. DOI: 10.1002/2327-6924.12141 Article first published online: 4 JUN 2014.

**MacLellan, L.,** Levett-Jones, T., Higgins, I., (2015). Nurse Practitioner Role Transition: A Concept Analysis. *The Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, 27(7), 389-397. DOI: 10.1002/2327-6924.12165. Article first published online: 4 SEP 2014.

**MacLellan, L.,** Levett-Jones, T., Higgins, I., (2015). A Game of Snakes and Ladders: Negotiating the ups and downs of endorsement as a Nurse Practitioner in Australia. *Contemporary Nurse Journal*, 50(2-3) 139-148. DOI:10.1080/10376178.2015.110135. first publishes online: 28 SEPT 2015.

**MacLellan, L.,** Levett-Jones, T., Higgins, I., (2016). The Enemy Within: Power and Politics in the Transition to Nurse Practitioner. *Nursing Plus Open*, 2, 1-7. DOI: 10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.003.

**MacLellan, L.,** Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T. (2016). An exploration of the factors that influence nurse practitioner transition in Australia: A story of turmoil, tenacity and triumph. Manuscript submitted to *the Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, March 2016. Manuscript under review.

## ***CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS FROM THIS THESIS***

Abstracts from conference presentations are available in Appendix 1.

**MacLellan, L Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T.**

International Council of Nurses Nurse Practitioner /Advanced Practice Network,  
Toronto, Canada. Sept 2008.

**Oral presentation:** *Innovation and collaboration in nurse practitioner education: a blueprint for clinical practice.*

**MacLellan, L. Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T.**

4<sup>th</sup> Australian Nurse Practitioner Association: Nurse Practitioners: A solution for the  
Future October 2008.

**Oral presentation:**

*The Secrets of Success: An Exploration of the Transition of Registered Nurse to Nurse  
Practitioner Practice in Australia*

**MacLellan, L. Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T.**

25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, Phoenix, AZ.  
June 2010.

**Oral presentation:**

*Transition to NP practice in Australia: what really happens on the journey to the top?*

**MacLellan, L. Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T.**

International Council of Nurses Nurse Practice/Advanced Practice Network, Brisbane,  
September 2010.

**Oral presentation:** *Transition to NP practice in Australia: Readiness, Resilience and  
Reaping the Rewards*

**MacLellan, L.,** Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T.

International Council of Nurses - NP/APN Network Conference, Advanced nursing practice: Global vision - global reality. London. 20-22 August 2012.

**Oral presentation:** *Negotiating hurdles in transition to practice: Narratives from Australian Nurse Practitioners*

**MacLellan, L.,** Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T.

Australian College of Nurse Practitioners 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, Surfers Paradise, 6-9 September 2012.

**Oral presentation:** *Acceptance of the Nurse Practitioner Role in Australia: Rhetoric or Reality?*

**MacLellan, L.,** Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T.

2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Capital Territory Nursing & Midwifery Research Conference, *Navigating the way to quality care.* Canberra, 10-11 October 2012.

**Oral presentation:** *The personal experiences of Australian Nurse Practitioners during transition to practice: Stories from the field.*

**MacLellan, L.,** Higgins, I., Levett-Jones, T. 10<sup>th</sup> Australian College of Nurse Practitioners Annual Conference, Melbourne, Australia.

**Poster and rapid oral presentation:** *Medical Acceptance of the Nurse Practitioner Role in Australia: A Decade on. September, 2015.* Awarded first prize best poster and rapid oral presentation.

## **GLOSSARY**

AUTHORIS- ATION	This term was superseded by the term Endorsement in 2010
ACNP	Australian College of Nurse Practitioners
AHPRA	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) is responsible for the implementation of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme across Australia. Supports the National Health Practitioner Boards (such as the Nursing and Midwifery Board Australia) in implementing the scheme.
AMA	Australian Medical Association
ANF	Australian Nursing Federation
ANMF	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
ANMAC	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council—ANMAC is the independent accrediting authority for nursing and midwifery under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. ANMAC sets standards for accreditation and accredits nursing and midwifery programs leading to registration and endorsement, and for the providers of those programs
ANP	Advanced nursing practice is a continuum along which nurses develop their professional knowledge, clinical reasoning and judgement, skills and behaviours to higher levels of capability (that is recognisable). Nurses practising at an advanced level incorporate professional leadership, education and research into their clinically based practice
APN	Advanced Practice Nurse
CNC	A Clinical Nurse Consultant is one grade below an NP. A CNC does not have the authority to prescribe medications, order investigations or refer their patients to a specialist.
CNS	A clinical nurse specialist is an RN who is working at an advanced practice nurse. A CNS is two grades below an NP
CPG	Clinical Practice Guidelines were designed to support NP practice. They are no longer required since NPs must now enter into a collaborative arrangement with their medical colleagues instead.
ENDORSE- MENT	An endorsement of registration recognises that a person has an extended scope of practice in a particular area because they have an additional qualification that is approved by the National Board. [Nurse Practitioner] endorsement may only be granted to registered nurses (division 1) who are qualified for advanced practice in nursing.
ICN	International Council of Nurses
RDA	Rural Doctors Association
RN	Registered nurse

MBS	Medicare Benefits Schedule—this a listing of the Medicare services subsidised by the Australian Government. The schedule is part of the wider Medicare Benefits Scheme managed by the Department of Health
NMBA	Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia—the NMBA is the national regulator for the nursing and midwifery professions in Australia. It is established under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law) 43, as in force in each state and territory. Its primary role is to protect the public and set standards and policies that all nurses and midwives registered within Australian must meet.
NP	Nurse practitioner means a nurse whose registration has been endorsed by the Board as a nurse practitioner under section 95 of the National Law.
NSW	New South Wales
NHS	National Health Service
Nurse Practitioner Endorsement via Pathway 1	The Board has two pathways that fulfil the education requirements for endorsement as a nurse practitioner. Pathway 1: Evidence of successful completion of an Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC)-accredited and Board-approved nurse practitioner program of study at Masters level.
Nurse Practitioner Endorsement via Pathway 2	Pathway 2: Evidence of successful completion of: a program of study at Masters level that is clinically relevant to the applicant’s context of advanced practice nursing for which they are seeking endorsement as a nurse practitioner; and supplementary education that will demonstrate equivalence and meet the <i>National Competency Standards for the Nurse Practitioner</i> .
PBS	Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme—this is a scheme run by the Australian Government to subsidise prescription medicines for Australians who have a Medicare card. If a medicine is subsidised under the scheme, the patient pays a lower price for the medicine, and the Australian Government pays the rest
RN	Registered nurse
TNP	Transitional Nurse Practitioner refers to a temporary NP role. If an NP position is advertised and there is no endorsed NP available to fill the role, an aspiring NP may be appointed in in a temporary capacity. The TNP will be provided with a timeline (usually 2 years) for completion of Master of Nurse Practitioner and finalising their endorsement. If the TNP does not fulfil the requirements by the agreed date then they will be required to vacate the position and it will be re-advertised.
Clinical viva or viva voce examination	A method of assessing students’ ability to use knowledge in a face-to-face examination

## ***ABSTRACT***

### **Background**

Whilst nurse practitioners have been an integral part of healthcare systems around the developed world for more than 50 years, they were first endorsed in Australia in 2000 following much resistance from powerful medical groups. The numbers of nurse practitioners in Australia have been slow to increase. The delayed uptake of nurse practitioners may be due to challenges of transition.

### **Research Design and Methods**

The aim of this study was to explore the transition experiences of registered nurse to nurse practitioner in Australia. A longitudinal design was used to provide insights into the participant's perspectives as they transitioned during their first year of practice. Carspecken's critical ethnography and focused ethnography comprised the study methodology. A purposeful sampling was used to ensure diversity in gender, age, clinical specialty and location of practice. Data collection involved face to face interviews with ten newly endorsed nurse practitioners who were interviewed 3-4 times during their first 12 months of practice. Data were analysed thematically.

### **Key Findings**

Analysis of the data from the 32 interviews revealed a range of personal, intraprofessional, interprofessional and organisational factors that impact transition. There were four main themes; *Great expectations* captures the personal aspirations participants held for their new roles and is presented as a paper prepared for publication titled 'An exploration of the factors that influence nurse practitioner transition in Australia: A story of turmoil, tenacity and triumph'. *We eat our own/Tall poppies* depicts the participants' intraprofessional relationships and their experiences of subversion and subterfuge. This theme is also captured in a publication titled 'The enemy within: Power and Politics in the Transition to Nurse Practitioner'. *Building bridges: Collaboration and collegiality* shows that the nurse practitioners' allies were medical colleagues. This theme is also reported in a publication titled: 'Medical Acceptance of the Nurse Practitioner Role: A decade on'.

Lastly, *Organisational labyrinths and hurdles* depict the confusing endorsement processes at the time of the study and is also presented as a publication titled: 'A game of snakes and ladders: Negotiating the 'ups and downs' of endorsement as a Nurse Practitioner in Australia'. The publication 'Nurse Practitioner Role Transition: A Concept Analysis' clarifies the meaning of transition in the context of this study revealing antecedents, consequences and its attributes using model cases from this research.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study reveal an unsupportive nursing culture and lack of organisational support impacting newly endorsed nurse practitioners during transition. Rather than collegiality and support from their colleagues, nurses experienced bullying and power struggles that left them feeling isolated, powerless and alienated. Several of the participants resigned from their nurse practitioner positions, leaving their rural and remote communities without much needed healthcare services.

Senior leaders and managers need to be aware of the potential challenges faced by NPs during their first year of practice. The findings of this study suggest that new nurse practitioners should be mentored and supported in scoping and embedding their role into the health care team. Education for nurse practitioners should include topics such as the transition experience, imposter syndrome, resilience, clinical leadership, conflict management and negotiating organisational change.