

Faculty for Rural Nursing and Midwifery

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Robyn Williams: Now I've got one of those really daunting challenges. At least the next speaker has got one. It says she's supposed to talk for 4.53 minutes—four minutes and 53 seconds. I once had to do that in a program called World Safari that David Attenborough chaired from London, and this was 15 countries with a live hook-up. They said, "Talk for four minutes and 47 seconds," and I did. And then I saw Prince Philip, who was the penultimate speaker before me—and I saw him at a conference in Perth and said, "You cheated. You were on video." He went purple, with steam coming out of his ears. It was quite amazing. Anyway, here you are.

Marg McLeod: Thank you.

Robyn Williams: Marg, do speak about the new faculty.

Marg McLeod: All right. I'll speak very fast.

Robyn Williams: You've got plenty of time.

Marg McLeod: Okay. Prior to my current employment I was the Executive Director of Australian Rural Nurses and Midwives, known as ARNM. Our organisation, like many other not-for-profit organisations, constantly faced the challenges of whether we would be sustainable in the next funding round. It was always a worry. By the middle of 2008 ARNM was faced with the urgent need to review its operational model and to secure long-term sustainability. After much robust debate by the Committee of Management, it was decided that our organisation should become a faculty. But where should this faculty be placed? We, at first, had talks with Rosemary Bryant, the Executive Director of Royal College of Nursing Australia, and she was very receptive to the idea of a faculty model, and later the Board of Directors also endorsed the faculty model to become a part of their larger nursing peak body.

After many months of negotiation and consultation with the Department of Health and Ageing and also keeping our members in tune with what was going on, because that was a very important step to involve our members, we launched the Faculty for Rural Nursing and Midwifery with RCNA. Yes, there it is (PowerPoint slide). It was an exciting time, and Debra Cerasa, the new CEO of RCNA, actively supported this initiative. And I should add that Debra is a really experienced rural nurse and midwife, so she personally endorses this concept from her own experience base.

While the change has been enormous, from an independent Secretariat to a faculty within a large nursing peak body, I think it has been very successful. We continue to represent our members and to be continually committed to our vision of representing the voice, views and values of rural nurses and midwives. To this end, our ongoing relationship with the National Rural Health Alliance further strengthens our position to actively engage with government and in many other forums to represent the views and the voices of rural nurses and midwives.

Finally, I'd just like to say, and I hope I'm within my time limit, if anyone would like to hear more about the steps involved in this process from an independent organisation to a unit within a larger peak body, please don't hesitate to come and talk to me at the RCNA booth. I'd be very happy just to discuss the steps involved, for this model mightn't be the model for you. I'm not trying to push that. But I'm just trying to support colleagues who might be going through a similar dilemma right now.

Thank you very much.

Robyn Williams: Have a cookie for being on time.

Marg McLeod: Oh, thank you.

Robyn Williams: Four minutes and 52 seconds—that was brilliant—Dr Marg McLeod.

