



Developing an awareness of professionalism:
nursing in Australia, 1899 - 1975

Mary Peterson.

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement
for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department
of History of the University of Adelaide.

March 1995

Contents

	page
Statement	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of illustrations	vi
Abbreviations	viii
1. Introduction	1
2. The establishment of associations	8
3. Wartime rivalry	41
4. Focus on education	62
5. The concept of professionalism	97
6. The image of the nurse	128
7. Nursing as an occupation for women	148
8. Conclusion	184
Bibliography	188

Statement

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any degree of diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I consent to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

Mary Peterson

Abstract

Developing an awareness of professionalism: nursing in Australia, 1899 - 1975

This thesis examines the changing concerns and aspirations of general nurses in Australia from 1899 to 1975.

It is shown that the first nurses' associations were developed under doctors' direction; how between the 1920s and World War Two rivalry and hostility developed between the longer established associations and the emerging nurses' unions. The thesis then shows how in the post-war years, nurses' concerns began to focus on the basic education nurses were then receiving. These concerns became more vigorously expressed when in the 1960s nurses began to claim that they should be accorded the status of professionals in the health care team. They argued that to ensure this status nursing education should be provided in tertiary educational institutions.

This thesis further argues that nurses would not have been able to claim professional status had not the concept of professionalism changed to admit the new technological occupations which had developed since World War Two. An analysis of the writing on professionalism from the early twentieth century until the 1970s is given as a background to show how this intellectual debate influenced the attitude of Australian nurses.

Finally, the thesis considers nursing as a predominantly women's occupation in the light of the discussion on professionalism, and describes the changes of the community's

image of the nurse, which has included the Angel of Mercy, the battle-axe and the sex-pot. To illustrate the description of these changes, a number of illustrations are included which are taken from sources over the period covered by the thesis.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to a number of people and institutions, without whose help the research for this thesis would have been much more difficult.

I make special mention for access to their archives of the Australian Nursing Federation (formerly the Royal Australian Nursing Federation), the New South Wales Nurses' Association, the College of Nursing (Australia) and the New South Wales College of Nursing. The librarians and archivists of the Australian Archives Brighton, the Archives of Business and Labour (Canberra), the Australian War Memorial, the Mitchell Library and the Mortlock Library gave high quality personal service, for which I am most thankful.

I am particularly grateful to a large number of individual nurses for their interest and support, especially the twenty nurses who consented to be interviewed and who were extremely generous with their time. I intend to place the interview transcripts in the Mortlock Library when they are completed. Particular mention must be made of

List of illustrations

Chapter 2.

Fig.

1. Margaret Graham, Matron, Royal Adelaide Hospital. R.A.H. archives.
2. Royal British Nurses' Association headquarters, Dequetteville Tce, Kent Town (Adelaide), taken 1912. The building still stands. R.A.H. archives.
3. Funeral of Miss E. Williams, Deputy Matron and Night Superintendent, 1919. Senior Sisters walked beside the hearse and all nursing staff not on duty provided a guard of honour for the cortège. R.A.H. archives.

Chapter 4.

1. Council of the College of Nursing Australia, 1950. R.A.H. archives.
2. Flinders Ward, Royal Adelaide Hospital, taken 3 December, 1906. R.A.H. archives.
3. Nurses' graduation ceremony, Bonython Hall, December 1952. Dr. J.W. Rollinson, Director-General of Medical Services delivering the address. R.A.H. archives.

Chapter 6.

1. Florence Nightingale at Scutari. Engraving from the *Illustrated London News*, 1855. Reproduced in Masson, Madeleine. *A pictorial history of nursing*. Twickenham: Hamlyn Publishing, 1985, p. 59.
- 1A. Florence Nightingale with lamp
- 1B. Stamp issued in September 1955 using the image of the Lady with the Lamp, reproduced in the *Australasian Nurses' Journal*, August 1955, title page.
2. Nurse serving brandy to an invalid - advertisement appearing regularly in the *Australasian Nurses' Journal* during the 1920s.
3. Nightingale drawn with angel's wings and as a Nightingale. Reproduced in Masson, Madeleine. *A pictorial history of nursing*. Twickenham: Hamlyn Publishing, 1985, p. 49.

4. Statue of Una, 'lovely lady' of the Red Cross Knight. *Una* vol.74, no.4, Jul-Aug 1976, title page.
5. "Sister" - a study by Ivor Hele. Original at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.
6. 1940 stamp
7. Sentimental picture of the nurse as an 'Angel of Mercy'. Reproduced in Muff, Janet, ed. *Socialization, sexism and stereotyping; women's issues in nursing*. St. Louis: Mosby, 1982. p. 278.
- 7A Nurse gently touching a small child in a dimmed ward. *Nursing Times* vol.65, 11 Sep 1969, p. 1184.
8. Cartoon of dead doctor. *ANJ* vol.2 Oct 1973
9. Sexy nurses on 'Get Well' cards purchased 1988.
10. Nurses' uniform advertisement appearing regularly in the *Australasian Nurses' Journal* during the 1920s.
11. Nurses' uniform advertisement appearing regularly in the *Australasian Nurses' Journal* during the 1920s.
12. Nurses in advertising, 1949
13. Three nurses who graduated from Sydney Hospital. *The Telegraph*, August 1951.
14. RAH finalists, early 1945. R.A.H. archives.
15. RAH finalists, July 1956. R.A.H. archives.
16. RAH finalists, (Group 682) 1972. R.A.H. archives.
17. Miss NSW Nurse Quest entrants. *The Lamp* April 1972, p.75.
19. Nurse in Kotex advertisement which appeared regularly in the *Australasian Nurses' Journal* in the 1920s.
20. Nurse in Marmite advertisement, *Australasian Nurses' Journal* October 1956, p.258.
21. Nurse in Ovaltine advertisement often appearing in the 1930s.

Chapter 7.

1. Florence Nightingale portrait. Reproduced in Masson, Madeleine. *A pictorial history of nursing*. Twickenham: Hamlyn Publishing, 1985, p. 56.
2. Photograph of Florence Nightingale taken at Claydon in 1891. Courtesy of the *Nursing Mirror* (now incorporated in the *Nursing Times*).
3. A Red Cross poster from World War One, portraying a nurse as an archetypal mother figure embracing a wounded soldier. Reproduced in Masson, Madeleine. *A pictorial history of nursing*. Twickenham: Hamlyn Publishing, 1985, p.85.
4. Cartoon from the *Lamp* Vol.2, January 1945, p.12.

List of abbreviations.

ANF	Australian Nursing Federation
AANS	Australian Army Nursing Service
AAMWS	Australian Army Medical Womens' Service
ATNA	Australasian Trained Nurses' Association
AUNA	Australian United Nurses' Association
Aust Nurses J	Australian Nurses' Journal. This is a different journal from the <i>Australasian Nurses' Journal</i> , which is always written in full.
BMA	British Medical Association
DGMS	Director General of Medical Services
HEU	Hospital Employees' Union
ICN	International Council of Nurses
NSW	New South Wales
NSWNA	New South Wales Nurses' Association
PTS	Preliminary Training School
RAH	Royal Adelaide Hospital
RBNA	Royal British Nurses' Association
RVCN	Royal Victorian College of Nursing
RVTNA	Royal Victorian Trained Nurses' Association
SA	South Australia
SAPD	South Australia. Parliamentary Debates
TNG	Trained Nurses' Guild
USA	United States of America
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment
WA	Western Australia