

7 March 2016

To the Journal Management Board members,

I write this letter in advance of the announcement of the selected publisher in order to give my reflections from the perspective of founding editor. My views and opinions are my own.

I accepted the commission from ACNN to take on the project of starting up a peer-reviewed journal and launched into the project with great enthusiasm. There was some groundwork involving inviting other professional organisations to collaborate then the business of finding a publisher and setting up the editorial process, initiating and maintaining a high standard for content.

We began with three colleges and have added the fourth in the last few years. The first issue was published in 1998 and publication has continued for almost 18 years. I stepped down after six years as founding editor; those six years consumed much of my time, efforts and yes some of my personal income as financial support was minimal. There were various struggles and obstacles but throughout we believed in the journal and were committed to its continuance.

Starting up a journal involved a considerable financial outlay so the choice of publisher was important. We selected Cambridge Publishing (formerly Inkpress International) because they offered a model for potential self-funding from advertising revenue, which was successful for other journals in their portfolio. Sadly, this model failed for NPCHN as in almost 18 years insufficient advertising was secured to relieve the financial burden on the colleges, despite best efforts.

It has become clear that the Cambridge team are unable to develop the journal to any great extent, mostly due to not being a specialist publisher in health or science fields. The only changes have been the transfer to electronic publishing to reduce costs and the introduction of Scholar One for manuscript submission and management. Content did not increase in the last 17 years; indeed the number of issues went from four down to three per year. Attempts to be listed on Medline failed. Basically, although everyone was trying hard, the journal is stagnating.

Having reached the stage of escaping from contractual obligations with Cambridge, it was exciting to know that we attracted the interest of a prestigious publisher such as Elsevier. It was very encouraging to me that this company saw the value of our journal and are prepared to invest in it. Elsevier seems to believe the journal could be much more successful and has the experience and track record to support this belief. Naturally, their investment comes at a cost to the colleges, but the investment would be well worthwhile and I believe would guarantee the survival of the journal. I note that another college, Australian College of Critical Care Nurses, first began their journal *Australian Critical Care* with Cambridge (and recommended that we do also) but has since moved to Elsevier. It is a journal similar to ours in purpose and content – perhaps that experience encourages Elsevier to offer us a contract.

Over the life of the journal various editors and associate editors, all of whom are voluntary and therefore time-poor, have tried to encourage submissions, offering writing workshops and other assistance. Elsevier offers considerable assistance for the editorial team, not only by taking over much of the editorial work but also by running writing workshops with their editors who are experienced in this training (and are paid for this). One of the problems for the journal has been the poor writing skills among nurses, as it is a skill not all nurses have and it is a barrier to publishing for

many. Improving writing skills is not a quick-fix; it requires mentoring and follow up over time to develop better writing.

It is my firm belief that only by accepting the offer from Elsevier can the viability and continued growth of the journal be secured. I believe that if the contract remains with Cambridge then the journal will continue to languish and eventually fold. This is a difficult thing for me to write but I believe that we are at a crossroad point; either we invest in the journal and breathe life into it or we continue on the same path, which as far as I can see leads nowhere.

I accept that this letter is my personal view however I hope the owners of the journal will think carefully and deeply about the publishing contract decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shelley Reid". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Shelley" on the top line and "Reid" on the bottom line.

Shelley Reid
(ACNN Secretary)