

“KARINGAL”



School of Nursing & Midwifery



SNM Aged Care REPORT No.5

BUILDING CONNECTIONS in AGED CARE

Follow up evaluation FINAL REPORT



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing

Developing support structures for student nurses
on placement in residential care

Building Connections in Aged Care Follow Up Evaluation

Final Report

SNM Aged Care Report No. 5

Andrew Robinson, Sharon Andrews-Hall, Matthew Fassett, Louise Venter,
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Executive Summary

Background to the Building Connections in Aged Care Project

Problems with recruitment and retention of nurses in aged care are ongoing. Its importance is highlighted by the *The National Review of Nursing Education 2002* (Department of Education; Science and Training and Department of Health and Ageing 2002),¹ which reports that currently the recruitment and retention of aged care nurses is ‘the most significant issue’ related to the aged care workforce. If the situation is to change it is imperative we address the historically negative images associated with aged care, so that newly graduated nurses consider the sector as a viable career option.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery (SNM), University of Tasmania (UTas), has taken up this agenda in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project. The project, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing as a part of the Commonwealth Aged Care Nursing Scholarship Support Systems (CACNSS) program, had a focus on developing undergraduate clinical placements in aged care to provide student nurses with a positive learning experience. A key intent was to determine if this experience facilitated the students’ interest toward working in the sector following graduation.

The *Building Connections* project was conducted in collaboration with six aged care industry partners², who co-funded the research with the School of Nursing and Midwifery (SNM), University of Tasmania (UTas). It involved a three-stage research design, conducted over an eighteen month period between September 2003 and April 2005. The project explored possibilities for developing quality clinical placements in aged care through;

- (1) trialling sustainable support structures for undergraduate nursing students in practice in residential aged care facilities (RACFs);
- (2) promoting aged care as an attractive working environment for student nurses and thus facilitate their interest in working in the sector, and;
- (3) facilitating professional development among aged care nurses to increase their capacity to effectively support undergraduate students in aged care.

During the project the six industry partners provided sites for three different cohorts of second year nursing students (N=61) to undertake 3-week clinical placements, under the supervision of RN and EN preceptors (N=37) who were employed in the RACFs. It utilised an innovative 4th Generation Evaluation methodology (Gubra & Lincoln, 1989),³

¹ Department of Education; Science and Training and Department of Health and Ageing (2002). *National Review of Nursing Education: Literature reviews*. Canberra, Ausinfo.

² The industry partners include Karingal Home for the Aged, The Manor Nursing Home, Mount St Vincent’s Nursing Home, Presbyterian Homes Launceston, Queen Victoria Home for the Aged and Vacluse Gardens Lodge.

³ Guba, E. G. and Y. S. Lincoln (1989): *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Sage Publications, Newbury Park.

which has a strong focus on promoting the research participants' involvement as collaborators in the research process. The methodological intent was to foster student and preceptor collaboration in a process of developing, implementing and evaluating strategies to facilitate teaching and learning in practice, and thereby support students to have a positive experience in aged care.

The project involved three stages which included;

- (1) scoping the issues that impacted on teaching and learning in the clinical settings and the capacity of the RACFs to support the students' learning;
- (2) testing strategies to facilitate quality clinical placements in aged care, and;
- (3) investigating the sustainability of improvements achieved in stage 2 of the project.

The project stages were conducted over three successive academic semesters, with one cohort of students undertaking a clinical placement in the RACFs each semester. The three regions within the State formed the basic organisational units, with two RACFs in each region of the research. Separate student and preceptor groups in each region met weekly in alternate locations during the placements. These meetings were facilitated by members of the research team.

The findings of the *Building Connections* project indicated that the use of a 4th Generation Evaluation method was effective in facilitating the development of quality clinical placements in aged care. Key findings demonstrated;

1. significant improvements in student attitudes to working in the sector;
2. the vulnerability of RACFs capacity to support students and maintain quality when unexpected change strikes;
3. that a thorough and well-planned orientation into RACFs is critical in "setting up" nursing students for a positive experience of aged care, and;
4. that promoting continuity between student and preceptors, so they have the opportunity to work together over time, enhances students learning.

Overall, the project findings highlight the effectiveness of the approach utilised in the *Building Connections* project to bring about a positive shift in student attitudes toward working in the aged care sector.

The final report of the *Building Connections* project is available at: http://www.snm.utas.edu.au/research/building_connections.html

The Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation

In line with Recommendations 2 and 3 made in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* final report, the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing funded the SNM to conduct a follow-up evaluation.

The *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* has the following two key objectives.

- (1) Given the focus in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project to develop sustainable support structures for students on placement in RACFs, a key interest of the *Follow-up Evaluation* was to determine if (a) the quality of the students' clinical experience and (b) their attitudinal change to working in aged care following

graduation, could be sustained. The intent was to provide evidence of the sustainability of the approach employed in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project, as a strategy to develop quality clinical placements in aged care. The students involved in this aspect of the research are referred to as the **Intervention Group**, since the facilities in which they undertook their placements were involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project.

- (2) To further evaluate the impact of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* research, the experience of those students who undertook clinical placements in RACFs that were **NOT** involved in the *Building Connections* project were evaluated. This evaluation enabled a determination to be made regarding any change in these students' attitude to working in aged care, as a result of their experience in the non research based RACFs. In this report these students are referred to as the **Control Group**, since they undertook clinical placements in RACFs **not** involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project. The aim is to compare the findings between the control and intervention student groups in order to provide further evidence of any impact on student attitudes/experience as a consequence of the intervention RACFs involvement in the research.

The *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* involved a two-stage process undertaken over the 2005 academic year which included:

1. **Stage 4A** conducted with the control and intervention student groups in first semester 2005 (N=38).
2. **Stage 4B** conducted with a second cohort of control and intervention students in second semester 2005 (N=34).

The evaluations utilised similar cohorts of second year Bachelor of Nursing students as those who participated in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project. As well, the same instruments as those administered in the *Building Connections* project were used in the follow-up evaluation. However, ethical approval was obtained to add an additional coding to the instruments in order to track surveys completed by individual de-identified students, for the purpose of assessing the statistical significance of the change in student attitude towards working in aged care.

Limitations

A limitation of the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* related to the difficulty experienced by the research team in gaining access to students to ensure they filled in all evaluations at all three data collection points in the study; (a) prior to commencing the placement, (b) at the completion of the first week, and (c) at the completion of the practicum. This compromised the research team's ability to track changes in student attitude for the entire cohort, as each practicum progressed.

Project Findings

School of Nursing and Midwifery Interventions

Following the Building Connections in Aged Care project, the SNM undertook a number of interventions to address problems identified with student placements at the partner RACFs. These interventions, in effect, changed the School's dealings with **ALL** aged care facilities in the State which take nursing students on clinical placements (N=32). The interventions were designed to generally improve the quality of student practicums and included:

- A specific academic being allocated to communicate with each RACF, such that RACF staff liaise with a designated person to facilitate communication and continuity.
- The academic allocated to the RACF visiting the site to support preceptors rather than teach students.
- The language used in the documentation provided by the SNM to RACFs was developed to embrace the principles of Plain English.

Evidence collected by the SNM indicates that since the implementation of the above changes:

- Teaching staff have more contact with the facilities on an informal level to discuss student progress and development of competence.
- The SNM profile in the aged care sector in Tasmania has been significantly improved, such that aged care providers now recognise that the School is committed to aged care. This has had a positive impact on the providers' commitment to support students and facilitate teaching and learning.

These findings highlight the value associated with the School of Nursing and Midwifery becoming more actively involved with aged care providers. As demonstrated in the findings below, this can have a very positive impact on the nature of student placements in aged care.

Quality of Student Experience

The findings of the follow-up evaluation indicate a high level of sustainability in the quality experience for those students on placement in the RACFs previously involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project (intervention group students). At the same time the evaluation revealed substantial differences between control and intervention groups.

Orientation

The data analysis highlighted that the improvements achieved in the *Building Connections* project, in the provision of orientation programs to students, were largely sustained in both Stages 4A and 4B of the *Follow-up Evaluation*. It also revealed significant differences between the control and intervention group students with respect to the activities undertaken during orientation. Compared to the control group students in

Stage 4A, intervention group students reported more positive results for nearly two-thirds of the orientation activities. This outcome was particularly evident in areas identified within earlier stages of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project to be of critical importance, such as:

- Students being told how the shift would be organized – routines.
- Introductions to other staff.
- One person to coordinate the orientation.

Within Stage 4B the intervention student group results continued to show a similar trend in relation to the above areas, with a sustained improvement. Overall the intervention group data revealed that these students received a markedly better orientation to the RACFs than the control student groups.

However, it is also apparent that the orientation provided to the control group students had improved when compared to Stage 1 of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project. This further illustrates the impact of the SNM efforts to improve the preparation of all aged care facilities that accept students on clinical placement.

Facilitating Teaching and Learning

Information on the students' experience of being preceptored was evaluated as a part of the research. Responses from the intervention group students, regarding their experiences of being preceptored by nurses in the RACFs, indicate that the improvements achieved in Stages 2 and 3 of the *Building Connections* project were sustained in the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation*.

The data also revealed the intervention group students had significantly more positive experiences of teaching and learning than the control group students, in both Stages 4A and 4B of the *Follow-up Evaluation*. In Stage 4A the greatest difference in responses between intervention and control student groups was evident in the capacity of RACF staff to facilitate student learning with respect to their ability to:

- assist students to identify strategies to meet learning objectives;
- encourage students to be active learners;
- actively look for opportunities to optimise their own teaching and learning skills, and;
- gain information on the organisation of the undergraduate curriculum.

Students within the intervention group also rated their preceptors more positively than the control group, particularly with respect to the preceptors' ability to assess student skills and provide positive feedback. Similar results were achieved in Stage 4B of the project.

These findings highlight the benefits of preceptors having the opportunity to explore and develop their practice as a result of their participation in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project. They also indicate that the interventions aimed at improving the capacity of the RACF preceptors to facilitate teaching and learning, have been sustained over the 12 months following the *Building Connections* project. The findings demonstrate that with the appropriate support RACFs can effectively;

- facilitate student integration in the RACF;
- account for students' prior experience;
- facilitate student learning;
- effectively give feedback, and;
- support a positive attitude to working with preceptors.

Furthermore, the improved capacity of the intervention RACFs to facilitate teaching and learning is reflected in the positive shift in intervention group student attitudes towards working in aged care at the completion of their practicum.

Students Feeling Welcome and Supported

Within both control and intervention groups, students in Stage 4A rated their preceptors highly in terms of being friendly and supportive. This finding adds weight to the assertion made by SNM teaching staff that their efforts to improve communication with aged care facilities, informed by the findings of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project Stages 1-3, worked to improve the support students received in all RACFs during subsequent placements.

Interestingly within Stage 4B, students in the intervention group rated their preceptors significantly more friendly and supportive compared to the control group. This is consistent with the evaluation of teaching and learning (outlined above) where intervention group students in this stage of the research reported that their preceptors facilitated their acceptance onto the unit, which in turn helped the students to feel welcome and supported during their placement.

Changes in Career Intentions

Intervention Group Students — Assessing Sustainability of Improvement in Student Attitudes to Working in Aged Care

A key interest of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project was to establish sustainable support structures for students on placement in aged care facilities with the aim of promoting recruitment and retention in the sector. In the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* utilised an equivalent evaluation tool to that used in previous stages of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project to assess the change, if any, of student attitudes towards working in aged care following graduation. The focus of this part of the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* was to determine whether the positive results achieved in stages 2 and 3 of the *Building Connections* project could be sustained.

In the **Stage 4A** evaluation, conducted in May-June 2005, it was evident that **intervention group student** attitudes toward working in aged care following graduation became more positive as their placement progressed. This is consistent with the trend evident in Stages 2 and 3 of the *Building Connections* project. For example, prior to entry 40% of students in Stage 4A indicated a 'possible' interest in work in aged care, and at completion 72% of students expressed this interest, (with 29% in the 'definite' category) — a relative improvement of 80%. This finding illustrates that six months following the completion of the *Building Connections* research there was a sustained and indeed an

increased relative level of improvement in student attitude to working in aged care compared to earlier stages of the project.⁴ This is a significant improvement from Stage 1.

In the **Stage 4B** evaluation, conducted in September - October 2005, 12 months after the completion of the *Building Connections* research, it was evident that this cohort of **intervention group students** did not demonstrate as significant a positive shift as the previous cohort. For example, no students indicated that they would ‘definitely’ consider working in aged care at completion of the placement. However, the results were still positive, as it was evident that the students’ ‘possible’ intentions towards working in aged care did continue to improve over the course of the placement at a level not too dissimilar to the trend evident in Stages 2 and 3 of the *Building Connections* project. For example, prior to entry 38% of students indicated a ‘possible’ interest in working aged care following graduation and at completion this had improved to 55% — a relative improvement of 45%. While this is somewhat less than the previous Stage 4A cohort, it is significantly more positive than that recorded in Stage 1 and roughly equivalent with the relative improvement achieved in Stages 2 and 3.⁵

Overall, a combination of Stage 4A and 4B produced a relative improvement in attitude among the intervention group students of 64%. These results are consistent with the trend exhibited in Stages 2 and 3 of the project, which demonstrated a relative improvement in students attitude to working in aged care of 47%. This highlights that the approach utilised in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* research to facilitate quality clinical placements in aged care is effective in having a positive and sustainable impact on student attitudes to working in aged care following graduation.

Intervention Vs Control Group Students

The second evaluation compared the findings from the intervention group (those students on placement in RACFs previously involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project) with the control group (those students on placement in RACFs not previously involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project) for both Stage 4A⁶ and 4B.

In Stage 4A, it was apparent that the intervention student group had a significantly greater relative improvement in their attitude to working in aged care following graduation when compared to the control student group. For example, in **Stage 4A**, prior to entry to the RACFs 38% of **control group students** indicated an interest in working in aged care, while at completion of the practicum this has risen to 56% — a relative increase of 47%. As outlined above, in contrast, the relative improvement in attitude to working aged care among this cohort of intervention group students was 80%.

⁴ In stages 2 and 3 of the project where the relative improvement was 64% and 30% (using the disaggregated sample) respectively.

⁵ In stages 2 and 3 of the project where the relative improvement was 64% and 30% (using the sample that excludes 2 facilities which experienced major operational problems – see p. 28 of this report) respectively.

⁶ See Appendix 1 for a discussion on the analysis of results for the cohort of students who were included in the Stage 4A control group.

Similarly, in **Stage 4B**, conducted 12 months after the completion of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project, prior to entry to the RACFs 53% of **control group** students indicated an interest in working aged care, and at completion this has risen to 64% — a relative increase of 21%. In contrast, as outlined above, the relative improvement in attitude among the intervention group in Stage 4B, with respect to working aged care following graduation, was 45%.⁷

Overall, the relative improvement in attitude to working in aged care following graduation among the control group students in Stages 4A and 4B was 29%. This compares with a relative improvement of 64% for the intervention group students involved in these stages of the evaluation. This highlights the significant positive impact associated with students undertaking clinical placements in the intervention RACFs that had prior involvement in the Building Connections project.

The attitude change among students is further clarified when consideration is given to the statistical significance of changes in students' attitude to working in aged care following graduation. This is especially significant given that both control and intervention group students experienced a positive shift in attitude. Between the data collection points 'prior to entry to the RACFs' and 'completion of the practicum', the test of marginal homogeneity revealed

- a statistically significant shift in attitude among the intervention group students, and;
- no statistically significant shift in attitude among the control group students.

These findings confirm that the trend towards developing a positive attitude to working in aged care following graduation is far stronger among the intervention group students. This also highlights the sustainability of improvements made in earlier stages of the *Building Connections* project and validates the processes employed in that project to address negative attitudes among students. It is notable that this trend toward improvement in attitude has been demonstrated across the three final stages of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project.

Final Discussion and Recommendations

The four stages of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project involved 133 students. Analysis of data across the four project stages identifies a consistent trend of sustained improvement in: (1) student attitude to working in aged care following graduation and (2) quality of the placement experience among students involved in practicums in RACFs which participated in the *Building Connections* project. Moreover, the Stage 4 Follow-up evaluation findings also demonstrate a strong trend which positively differentiates the experience and attitudes of intervention group students from the control group students. These findings support the contention that the processes employed in the *Building*

⁷ It is notable that the relative improvement in attitude to working in aged care among both control and intervention student cohorts involved in Stage 4B was approximately half that of the Stage 4A control and intervention cohorts. We have no explanation for this phenomenon but it most probably relates to the individual characteristics of the respective student groups and the RACFs during the time of the placements.

Connections in Aged Care project resulted in a sustained increase in capacity, within the participating RACFs, to effectively support students on placement and thereby facilitate a positive change in their attitude to working in aged care. However, despite these findings, as outlined by Abbey et al (2006),⁸ the overall methodology utilised in the *Building Connections* project limits our capacity to generalise the results across settings and States as the project produced only Level 4 evidence.

Following the funding of the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation*, the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing funded the SNM to collaborate with other Australian universities to conduct the *Modelling Connections in Aged Care* project. This project has a primary aim of developing an evidence based/best practice clinical practicum model to facilitate quality clinical placements in aged care. This model, still under development, will be primarily based on the findings generated from the *Building Connections* project, as this provides a ‘research base of considerable and relative strength’ (Abbey, et al. 2006:41). A subsequent, and as yet unfunded stage of the project, is designed to test the model in a number of Australian States. However, given the findings of the Systematic review conducted as a part of the *Modelling Connections in Aged Care* project (Abbey et al. 2006), any future project designed to test this model must be undertaken in a manner that will provide level 2 evidence. This is important in order to ensure the generalisability of findings across settings within Australia.

Recommendation 1

That the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing fund the School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Tasmania to collaborate with other Schools of Nursing involved in the *Modelling Connections in Aged Care* project, to implement the evidence based/best practice clinical practicum model developed as a part of that project to facilitate quality clinical placements in aged care.

Recommendation 2

That the methodology utilised to implement the evidence based/best practice clinical practicum model developed as a part of the *Modelling Connections in Aged Care* project ensure the production of level 2 evidence that will allow the generalisation of the project findings across aged care settings and universities in Australia.

⁸ Abbey, J, Abbey, B., Jones, J., Robinson, A., Toye, C. and Barnes, L. *Modelling Connections in Aged Care: Clinical Placements for Undergraduate Students in Aged Care – A Systematic Review*. School of Nursing, Faculty of Health, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Queensland

Background

Problems with recruitment and retention of nurses in aged care are ongoing. It's importance is highlighted by the *The National Review of Nursing Education 2002* (Department of Education; Science and Training and Department of Health and Ageing 2002),⁹ which reports that currently the recruitment and retention of aged care nurses is 'the most significant issue' related to the aged care workforce. If the situation is to change it is imperative we address the historically negative images associated with aged care, so that newly graduated nurses consider the sector as a viable career option. The school of Nursing and Midwifery (SNM), University of Tasmania (UTas), has taken up this agenda in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project, which has a primary focus on developing 'quality clinical placements' for student nurses on clinical placements in residential aged care facilities (RACFs). In the current circumstances, the projects focus on developing strategies to facilitate a positive experience in aged care and thereby promote student nurses' interest in working in the sector, has never been more relevant.

The Building Connections in Aged Care Project

The *Building Connections in Aged Care* project was conducted in collaboration with six aged care industry partners¹⁰ with funding support from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) as a part of the Commonwealth Aged Care Nursing Scholarship Support Systems (CACNSS) program.¹¹ The project, which involved a three-stage research design was conducted over an eighteen month period between Sept 2003 and April 2005. It identified key strategies to facilitate quality clinical placements in aged care. The research explored possibilities for developing quality clinical placements in aged care through (1) developing sustainable support structures for undergraduate nursing students in practice in RACFs; (2) promoting aged care as an attractive working environment for student nurses and to facilitate their interest in working in the sector, and; (3) facilitating professional development among aged care nurses to increase their capacity to effectively support undergraduate students in aged care.

During the project the six industry partner RACFs provided sites for three different cohorts of second year nursing students (N=61). The students undertook 3-week clinical placements under the supervision of RN and EN preceptors (N=37). The project utilised a 4th Generation Evaluation methodology to foster student and preceptor collaboration. Through this strategies were developed and implemented to facilitate teaching and

⁹ Department of Education; Science and Training and Department of Health and Ageing (2002). National Review of Nursing Education: Literature reviews. Canberra, Ausinfo.

¹⁰ The industry partners include Karingal Home for the Aged, The Manor Nursing Home, Mount St Vincent's Nursing Home, Presbyterian Homes Launceston, Queen Victoria Home for the Aged and Vacluse Gardens Lodge.

¹¹ In addition, the industry partners and SNM also contributed funding and in-kind support.

learning in practice and thereby support students to have a positive experience in aged care. The three stages of the project involved:

- (1) scoping the issues that impacted on teaching and learning in the clinical settings and the capacity of the RACFs to support the students' learning;
- (2) testing strategies to facilitate quality clinical placements in aged care, and;
- (3) investigating the sustainability of improvement achieved in stage 2.

The three stages of the project were conducted over three successive academic semesters, with one cohort of students undertaking a clinical placement in the RACFs each semester. The three regions within the State formed the basic organisational units (with two RACFs in each region), with separate student and preceptor groups in each region meeting weekly in alternate locations during the placements. These meetings were facilitated by members of the research team.

The final Report of the *Building Connections* project is available at: http://www.snm.utas.edu.au/research/building_connections.html

Summary of Findings

The findings of the *Building Connections* project indicated that the use of a 4th Generation Evaluation method was effective in facilitating the development of quality clinical placements in aged care. This is apparent in the project findings which demonstrated a significant positive change in student attitudes towards working in aged care. The findings also identified that:

- a thorough and well-planned orientation into RACFs is critical in “setting up” nursing students for a positive experience of aged care,¹² and;
- promoting continuity between student and preceptor/mentor so that they have the opportunity to work together over time, enhances students learning and positively influences their interest toward working in the sector.

Overall, the project findings highlight the effectiveness of the approach utilised in the *Building Connections* project to bring about a positive shift in student attitudes toward working in the aged care sector.

Changes Implemented by the School of Nursing and Midwifery (SNM) as a result of the Building Connections in Aged Care project

In response to the problems identified in the *Building Connections* Stage 1 scoping study, the SNM implemented a number of changes in their dealings with **ALL** aged care facilities in the State, which accept students on clinical placements. These include:

¹² For example, the Stage 2 findings revealed that at the end of week one of the student practicum, following orientation to the facilities, **80%** of students indicated a possible/definite interest in working in aged care following graduation — an increase from **55%** prior to entry.

- A specific academic being allocated to communicate with each RACF, such that RACF staff now liaise with a designated person to facilitate communication and continuity;
- The academic allocated to the RACF visits the site to support preceptors rather than teach students;
- The language used in the documentation provided by the SNM to RACFs was developed to embrace the principles of Plain English, which dispensed with the use of academic jargon. Specifically, Plain English guidelines were developed which addressed:
 - student background and prior experience;
 - the learning objectives of the practicum, and;
 - students' stage in the Bachelor of Nursing course.
- An abbreviated and more user-friendly version of the information contained in the unit outline, relating to the students' course of study, was supplied in a covering letter to the RACFs.

Since the inception of the *Building Connections* project, SNM teaching staff now report that they have more contact with the facilities on an informal level to discuss student progress and development of competence. In these circumstances SNM teaching staff report that they have more confidence in making informed judgments about student progress.

Additionally, anecdotal reports from SNM staff indicate that the conduct of the *Building Connections* project has greatly raised the School's profile in the aged care sector in Tasmania. The flow on effect of this is that aged care providers now recognise that the School is committed to aged care and this in turn has had a positive impact on the providers' commitment to support students and facilitate teaching and learning. This process has also improved the credibility of the SNM because RACF staff realise that the School is familiar with the aged care sector and are more willing to negotiate with SNM staff regarding student placements.

Stage 4: The Building Connections In Aged Care Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation

The Stage 4 Follow Up Evaluation has two key foci.

Firstly, given the focus in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project to develop sustainable support structures for students on placement in RACFs, a key interest was to assess the sustainability of improvement in students' attitude to working in the sector. To this end, the final project report recommended that a follow up evaluation be conducted with second-year nursing students on placement in the RACFs involved in the *Building Connections* project, to determine if the students' attitudinal change to working in aged care following graduation was sustained. The intent was to provide evidence of the sustainability of the approach employed in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project to develop quality clinical placements in aged care. In the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* the students involved in this aspect of the research will be referred to as the

Intervention Group, since the facilities in which they undertook their placements were involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project.

Secondly, to further evaluate the impact of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* research, the project final report recommended that an evaluation also be conducted with those students who undertook clinical placements in RACFs that were **NOT** involved in the *Building Connections* project. This evaluation would enable a determination to be made regarding any change in these students' attitude to working in aged care as a result of their experience in these RACFs. In this report these students will be referred to as the **Control Group**, since they undertook clinical placements in RACFs **not** involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project. In the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* the aim was to compare the findings between the control and intervention student groups. To this end, the *Follow-up Evaluation* was undertaken over the 2005 academic year, with one evaluation being conducted in the first semester 2005 and a second, in the second semester 2005. It utilized the same instruments as those administered in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project and similar cohorts of second year Bachelor of Nursing students participated. The findings of the evaluations are outlined below.

Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation: Two Evaluations

Evaluation 1 — Intervention Group: Sustainability of improvement

A key interest of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project was to develop sustainable support structures for student nurses on placement in RACFs. However, while the project findings demonstrate the approach utilised was successful in developing quality clinical placements in aged care, it is important to acknowledge the project was directly supported by significant consultant and research input.

In contrast the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* assessed the sustainability of improvement in the RACFs involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project in circumstances where the participating RACF staff did not have ready access to consultant and research support. The areas evaluated included:

- The quality of the students' experience in the RACFs during the clinical placement.
- Change in career intentions associated with the students' involvement in the clinical placement.

Evaluation 2 — Control Group: Comparison with intervention group

Anecdotal evidence indicates that without appropriate support, student nurses on placement in aged care facilities often have negative experiences, which undermines their interest in working in the sector following graduation (Faberberg, Winbald and Elkman, 2000).¹³ In the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* the intent was to test this contention and

¹³ Fagerberg, I., B. Winbald and S. Ekman (2000): Influencing Aspects in Nursing Education on Swedish Nursing Students Choices of First Work Area as Graduated Nurses. *Journal of Nursing Education* 39(5): 211-218.

conduct an evaluation to determine the impact of a clinical practicum in aged care on student nurses who undertook their placement in facilities that received limited input or prior assistance to develop support structures. To this end the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* compared the experiences of students on placement in the partner RACFs involved in the *Building Connections* project (the intervention group), with the experiences of students on placement in non-partner facilities (the control group). This evaluation will provide further evidence of any impact on student attitudes/experience as a consequence of the RACFs involvement in the research.

Furthermore, the experiences of control and intervention group students who undertook clinical placements within first semester 2005 (Stage 4A) will also be compared to those control and intervention group students who undertook their placements in second semester 2005 (Stage 4B) (see evaluation phases below). This analysis will provide further evidence as to the continued sustainability of improvements achieved in earlier stages of the *Building Connections Project*.

Evaluation Phases

The evaluation will take place over two phases.

- Stage 4A: May – August 2005
- Stage 4B: September 2005 – March 2006.

Participants

Intervention Group

The *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* intervention group students comprised:

- **Stage 4A intervention group** – student nurses (N = 15)
- **Stage 4B intervention group** – student nurses (N = 14)

These students were on placement in five aged care facilities involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project.¹⁴ The table below outlines the number of students at each facility and provides details of the functional capacity of each facility.¹⁵

It is important to note that no students in the Stage 4A intervention group had prior experience in aged care. In Stage 4B 31% of students in the intervention group had worked in aged care, and of these students three quarters had worked as Personal Care Assistants (PCAs).¹⁶

¹⁴ Consistent with Recommendation 4 from the *Building Connections in Aged Care: Final Report*, one facility which participated in the *Building Connections* project did not take students in semesters 1 or 2 in 2005 because it had experienced significant organisational change which compromised its ability to effectively support students during this placement.

¹⁵ Information derived from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing web site — 'Lists of aged care services' at <http://www.health.gov.au/acc/rescare/servlist/servlist.htm>

¹⁶ Of note, in the *Building Connections* project of those students involved in Stages 2 and 3, where the interventions to facilitate quality clinical placements in aged care were undertaken, around 25% of students

Table 1. Profile of the intervention facilities and numbers of students on placement.

RACF Number	Number of Beds	Percentage High Care Beds	Percentage Low Care Beds	Number of students Stage 4A	Number of students Stage 4B
RACF 1	<65	50%	50%	3	3
RACF 2	65 – 100	47%	53%	NA	N/A
RACF 3	>100	29%	71%	1	2
RACF 4	65 – 100	100%	0%	4	4
RACF 5	>100	48%	52%	4	3
RACF 6	<65	98%	2%	3	2

Control Group

Control group students undertook clinical placement in six aged care facilities, located in the northwest, north and south of Tasmania, none of which participated in the *Building Connections* project. The control groups comprised:

- **Stage 4A control group** – student nurses (N = 24).
- **Stage 4B control group** – student nurses (N = 19).

Table 2 below shows the number of students in each control group RACF along with details relating to their functional capacity.¹⁷

Of the Stage 4A control group students 13% had previous experience in aged care as Enrolled Nurses. This was unusual as no other students involved in the project had prior experience as Enrolled Nurses. In Stage 4B no students had prior experience as Enrolled Nurses.

had prior experience working in aged care (range 15% - 40%). As such, with respect to prior experience in the sector, the cohorts involved in the Follow-up evaluation are not markedly different.

¹⁷ Information derived from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing web site — 'Lists of aged care services' at <http://www7.health.gov.au/acc/rescare/servlist/servlist.htm>

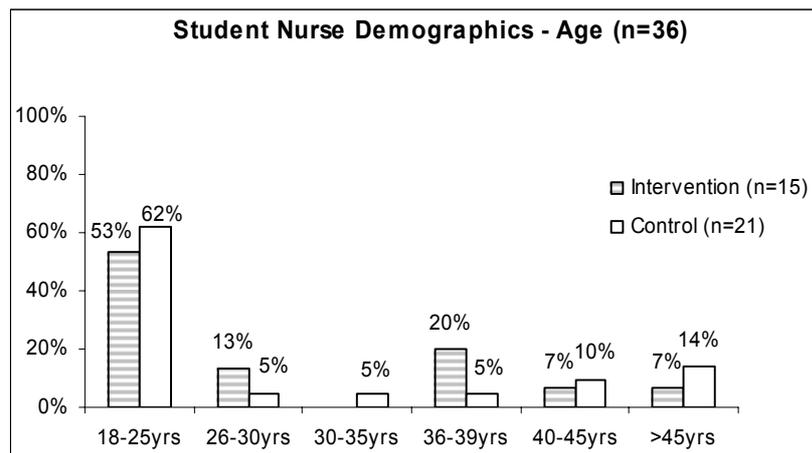
Table 2. Profile of the control facilities and numbers of students on placement.

RACF Number	Number of Beds	Percentage High Care Beds	Percentage Low Care Beds	Number of students Stage 4A	Number of students Stage 4B
RACF 8	65 – 100	47%	53%	5	5
RACF 9	65 – 100	41%	59%	3	2
RACF 10	<65	100%	0%	2	0
RACF 11	>100	46%	54%	2	2
RACF 12	65 – 100	41%	59%	4	4
RACF 13	>100	56%	44%	6	2
RACF 14	<65	86%	14%	2	4

It is evident from Tables 1 and 2 that profiles of the RACFs involved in Stage 4A and Stage 4B were similar.

Regarding student nurse demographics, it was evident that there was a range of student ages across the Stage 4A intervention and control group cohorts. However, the majority of the student nurses (approximately 60%) in both the intervention and control groups were aged between 18-25 years. A comparison of these groups is provided in Figure 1 below.

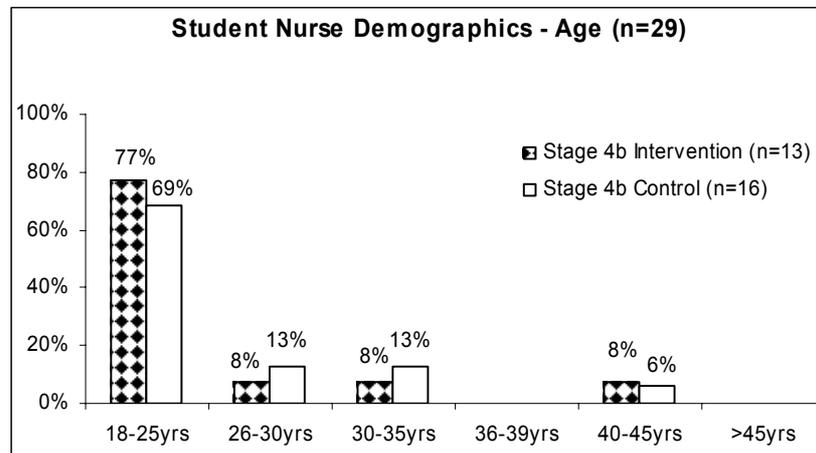
Figure 1. Stage 4A: Student nurse demographics - age.



Stage 4B students were younger on average when compared to the students in Stage 4A where around 70% of the intervention and control groups were aged between 18-25

years. No students in the Stage 4B cohorts had previously been enrolled nurses in an aged care facility – as occurred in Stage 4A.

Figure 2: Stage 4B: Student Nurse Demographics – Age



Data Collection

A number of evaluation instruments were utilised in both Stage 4A and B and were administered

- prior to the practicum;
- at week one, and;
- at completion.

A research assistant was assigned to each region (one in the Northwest, one in the North and one in the South) to manage the process of administering and collecting completed surveys for Stages 4A and 4B. Each research assistant physically visited the RACFs in their respective region to minimise data collection errors and to maximise the response rate. The evaluation tools employed in Stage 4A and Stage 4B of the *Follow-up Evaluation* are outlined below:

1. Student Initial Evaluation, Part 1 — distributed prior to the students' entry into facilities.

This instrument collected demographic data and assessed student attitude towards working in aged care, working with elderly residents, students' previous experience of working with preceptors and their intention of working in aged care following graduation.

2. Student Initial Evaluation Part 2 — distributed at the completion of week one of practicum.

This instrument collected information relating to the students' experience on arrival in the facilities, including the degree to which they felt welcome and the impact of the first week in practice on their attitude to working in aged care following graduation.

3. Orientation checklist — distributed at the completion of week one of practicum. Comprised a tick box questionnaire, which assessed the orientation information students received.
4. Student Final Evaluation — distributed on the final week of placement. This instrument reassessed student attitudes to working in aged care and their assessment of preceptors and other RACF staff they worked with.
5. Student Survey — distributed on the final week of placement. This survey sought information on teaching and learning and asked students to rate their responses on a Likert scale from 1 ('Strongly Disagree') to 5 ('Strongly Agree'). The list of questions is provided below:
 - Q1 The preceptors were effective in welcoming me to the unit
 - Q2 My preceptors introduced me to fellow staff and residents
 - Q3 My preceptors facilitated my acceptance on the unit
 - Q4 My preceptors acknowledged my prior experience when structuring teaching and learning opportunities
 - Q5 My preceptors assisted me to make decisions about my learning objectives/needs
 - Q6 My preceptors helped me identify strategies to meet my learning objectives/needs
 - Q7 My preceptors encouraged me to be an active learner (eg to seek information from the library, negotiate learning opportunities)
 - Q8 I feel more confident about my nursing practice
 - Q9 My preceptors actively looked for opportunities to optimise my teaching and learning
 - Q10 Through working with my preceptor, he/she gained useful information on the organization of the undergraduate curriculum
 - Q11 After this practice experience, I feel more confident about my competence in practice
 - Q12 When asked, my preceptor assessed my skills effectively
 - Q13 I received constructive feedback from my preceptors
 - Q14 I feel more positive about working with a preceptor than I did before

All instruments were interviewer administered in an attempt to maximize the response rates.¹⁸

¹⁸ Earlier stages of the project demonstrated that if surveys were left with students to return by post, response rates were very poor.

Data Analysis

Coding Student evaluations

All quantitative survey data collected in Stage 4 of the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* were analysed using Microsoft Excel™ 2002. SPSS v12.0 was also employed to specifically analyse the future career intentions of the students prior to entry, at one week and at completion.

A number of survey templates were built in previous stages of the project using Excel worksheets to capture data such as Likert scales, yes/no responses and demographics. These templates were expanded to capture Stage 4 data and modified to provide a summary of the data from all four stages.

Excel was chosen for the majority of the analysis due to the flexibility the software provides in structuring data tables and its powerful charting options. Each survey was assigned a unique alphanumeric code, which enabled the data to be audited for accuracy and to clarify any ambiguous results. Furthermore, additional coding was employed that made it possible to track surveys to individual, yet de-identified, students for the purpose of assessing the change in student attitudes towards working in aged care. Several methods were employed to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data including cell validation with pull-down lists, 'checksum' formulas and detailed random audits of surveys.

All surveys were manually keyed into the Excel templates and any non-responses or ambiguous responses were noted in a comments field attached to the relevant cell. Relevant data for the future career intentions component of the analysis was exported to SPSS.

Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was performed using Excel and the marginal test of homogeneity was used to analyse the level of significance in the change (if any) of student attitudes towards working in aged care. This test was run using SPSS v12.0 and was used to determine whether there was a significant change in the distribution of attitudes between the following evaluation points for both the control and intervention groups;

- prior to entry → at 1 week;
- at 1 week → at completion, and;
- prior to entry → at completion.

Limitations

A limitation of the project was the difficulty experienced by the research team in ensuring students filled in all evaluations at all three data collection points in the study. Despite employing research assistants in the three regions of the State to administer surveys to students, sickness and absenteeism were major impediments to achieving a 100%

response rate in both the stage 4A and Stage 4B evaluations. As a consequence, response rates for each of the evaluation tools employed are different depending on level of access to students at the particular time the tool was administered.

It should be noted that there is a discrepancy between the total numbers of respondents in the demographics section of this report for Stage 4B compared to the future career intentions section. Although a total of 29 surveys were returned at the time of the initial evaluation data collection, 1 respondent did not answer the future career intentions question correctly and has been excluded (leaving a sample size of 28 in the initial evaluation regarding future career intentions). Furthermore, to make a valid comparison between the initial, week 1 and final evaluations regarding future career intentions any respondents who did not answer the question regarding future career intentions in the initial evaluation have been excluded in subsequent evaluations. This has resulted in a smaller sample size in the Stage 4B group (n=18) due to problems with student availability and the fact that some of the respondents had not completed an initial evaluation and as such were excluded.

There is also some minor variability in the sample sizes in other areas of the report, which reflects non-responses and erroneous responses that have been excluded. Furthermore, in Stage 4B the research assistants encountered significant difficulties in accessing all students to complete the final evaluation which was undertaken on the final day of placement, which coincided with the final day of semester 2, 2005. In particular significant numbers of students in control facilities could not be tracked to complete the final evaluation and additionally some students that were accessed did not adequately fill out the final evaluations, which ultimately impacted on the availability of useful data.

The unavailability, lack of access to and absenteeism of students was an unfortunate occurrence and highlights the problems associated with accessing students on their last day of semester, particularly when they are often tired and anxious about impending examinations. Nonetheless, this is an important issue which the research team will address in future. An effective strategy to avoid this problem in the future will be to offer students and incentive to fill in all evaluations. It is notable that this situation did not occur in the earlier stages of the research most probably because the students were actively engaged with members of the research team on a weekly basis. The fact that this problem presented itself in the final stages of the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* has signaled to the research team that continued vigilance is required to inform students about their crucial role within such research and the significance of them attending placement and maximizing their participation. In this sense as a pilot project, *Building Connections in Aged Care* has provided an excellent source of information related to the intricacies and complexities of undertaking research with students across multiple sites in aged care. Lessons learnt from the research will create a solid foundation for future projects with undergraduate students in aged care.

Ethics Approval

Approval to conduct the project was obtained from the University of Tasmania, Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network, Northern Tasmania Health and Medical Human Research Ethics Committee: Ethics Ref: H7316.

Findings – Evaluation 1: Sustainability & Experience Intervention Group Students

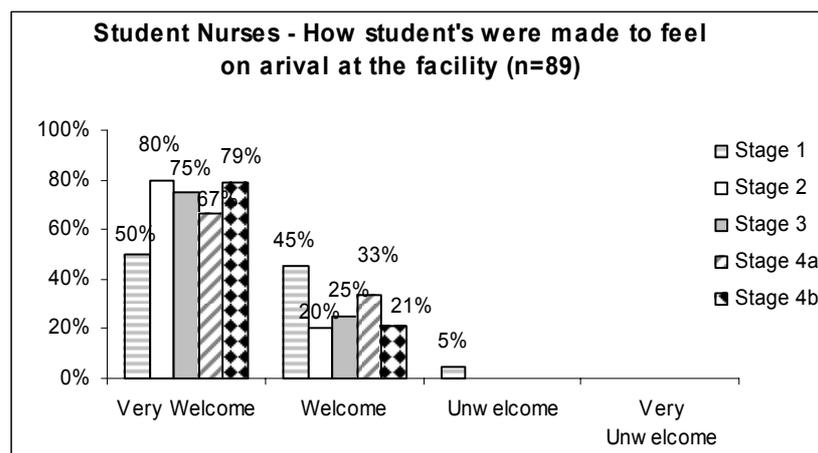
Quality of Student Experiences

Arrival to the Facilities – Preparation by the SNM

100% of intervention group students in Stages 4A and 4B reported feeling ‘**Welcome/Very Welcome**’ on their arrival to the RACFs. Figure 3 below demonstrates that within Stage 4B of the evaluation, the intervention facilities had improved compared to those in Stage 4A where 79% of students reported feeling ‘very welcome’ compared to 67%.

Overall the Stage 4 outcomes regarding the capacity of the facilities to make students feel welcome are consistent with Stages 2 and 3 and markedly better than Stage 1, which highlights the sustainability of improvement despite the absence of research support.

Figure 3. Student nurses - How students were made to feel on arrival at the facility¹⁹.



Furthermore, this finding also indicates that the interventions undertaken by the SNM to better target the RACFs with improved information and consultative processes, in order to facilitate their understanding of, and preparation for students, was effective.²⁰

Orientation

The Stage 4 (4A and 4B) results regarding orientation, provided in Table 3 (below), indicate a marked improvement in the quality of the orientation of students in the facilities when compared to Stage 1 of the *Building Connections* project. Again, these results also suggest that the SNM’s attempts to improve the information provided to

¹⁹ Stage 4A and 4B refers to intervention group student nurses only.

²⁰ See section above on Changes Implemented by the School of Nursing and Midwifery (SNM) as a result of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project

RACFs about students' arrival dates and times, as well as their learning needs, assisted the facilities to provide an effective orientation.

Table 3. A comparison of orientation experiences between the stages.

Question	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4a (Intervention)	Stage 4b (Intervention)	Stage 4a+b (Intervention)
Did one person coordinate your orientation?	85%	80%	90%	100%	86%	93%
Were you Introduced to the director of nursing?	80%	100%	79%	79%	86%	82%
Were you Introduced to other RNs?	90%	100%	86%	100%	93%	97%
Were you Introduced to ENs?	75%	100%	90%	93%	75%	85%
Were you Introduced to ECAs?	79%	95%	81%	87%	85%	86%
Were you Introduced to domestic & catering staff?	50%	95%	50%	86%	58%	73%
Shown where to put your bag?	75%	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Shown where the toilets are?	75%	100%	90%	100%	93%	97%
Shown the tea room?	85%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Told how the shift would be organised - routines?	60%	85%	70%	100%	77%	89%
Told when and where you will have meal breaks?	45%	75%	68%	87%	79%	83%
Told what to do in the event of fire or emergency?	65%	100%	76%	73%	79%	76%
Shown where the fire exits are?	40%	85%	57%	73%	64%	69%
Told what to do when the phone rings?	20%	60%	5%	47%	29%	38%
Told what the smoking policy is?	40%	65%	57%	80%	57%	69%
Told where you can access computing?	65%	100%	76%	67%	79%	72%
Told what books/resources are available and where?	30%	100%	81%	100%	93%	97%
Told what times the shifts finish?	85%	100%	100%	100%	93%	97%
Told what times the shifts start?	90%	100%	100%	100%	93%	97%
Told what to do if you are running late or can't work that shift?	30%	95%	90%	80%	86%	83%
Told what to do if I feel sick on a shift & need to go home?	20%	75%	62%	67%	71%	69%
Told what to do if you need to go home early?	25%	70%	71%	60%	57%	59%
Told what to do if you are feeling anxious or upset?	45%	95%	71%	73%	64%	69%
Told who to contact if you hurt yourself?	10%	70%	43%	67%	64%	66%
Told where you can access a telephone to make a call?	40%	80%	67%	67%	64%	66%
Given an orientation to the unit/area (walk around)?	75%	100%	90%	100%	100%	100%
Given an overview of manual handling and lifting policy?	50%	100%	57%	60%	64%	62%

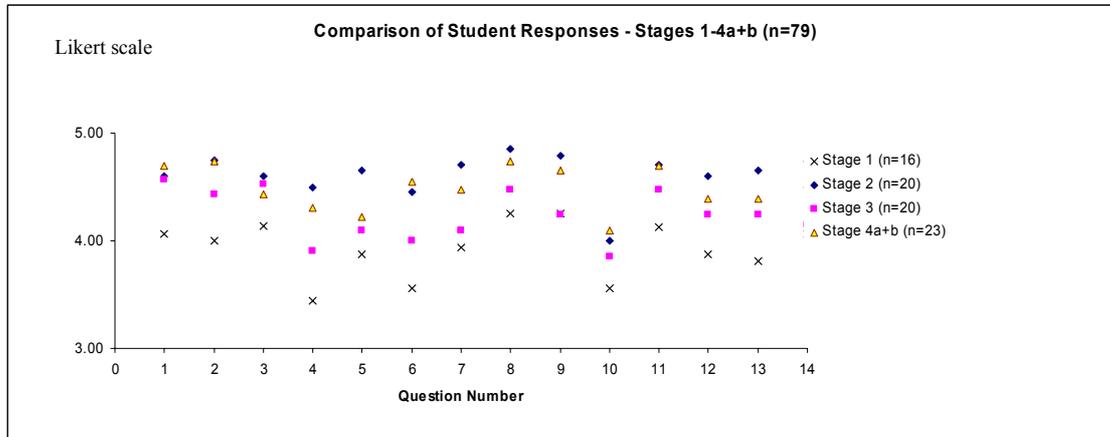
Generally, there was a high degree of equivalence between the quality of the orientation of students in Stage 4A and Stage 4B. However, it should be noted that Stage 4B did not perform as positively as Stage 4A in some areas. These include students being introduced to various staff, being told how shifts were organized and what to do when the phone rings. Nonetheless, the above table indicates that overall the Stage 4 intervention facilities (Stage 4A and 4B) were able to sustain the improvements seen in stages 2 and 3 of the project and in effect demonstrate continued improvement from Stage 1.

Teaching and Learning

Information on the students' experience of being preceptored was collected through the student survey (outlined on pages 7-8, point no. 5), which was distributed at the completion of their placement.

To assess the sustainability of improvements in the students' experience of being preceptored, demonstrated in stages 2 and 3 of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project, data from previous stages were compared to the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* and the results are outlined in Figure 4 (below). From Figure 4 it can be seen that the responses for the *Follow-up Evaluation* intervention groups were generally equivalent to or better than Stages 2 and 3, indicating sustainability of improvement.

Figure 4.²¹ Comparison of students' responses to survey items on the experience of being preceptored from Stages 2, 3 and 4²².



This finding indicates that the interventions aimed at improving the capacity of preceptors to facilitate teaching and learning²³ within the RACFs involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project have been sustained during the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation*. This finding demonstrates that with the appropriate support RACFs can effectively:

- Facilitate student integration in the RACF (Q2).
- Account for students' prior experience (Q4).
- Facilitate student learning (Q5, 6, 7 & 9).
- Effectively give feedback (Q13)
- Have a positive attitude to working with preceptors (Q 14).

These findings indicate that nurse preceptors have sustained a capacity to facilitate an educative agenda within the intervention group RACFs²⁴ and provide a positive learning experience for students.

Student Perceptions of Preceptors

At the completion of their placement students were asked how supportive and friendly their preceptors were. These questions tested the sustainability of previous interventions, which were aimed to prepare preceptors to support students and make them feel welcome within the facility. Figure 5 (below) demonstrates that there was a significant and

²¹ Figure 3 shows the average student response from a 5 point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) by question

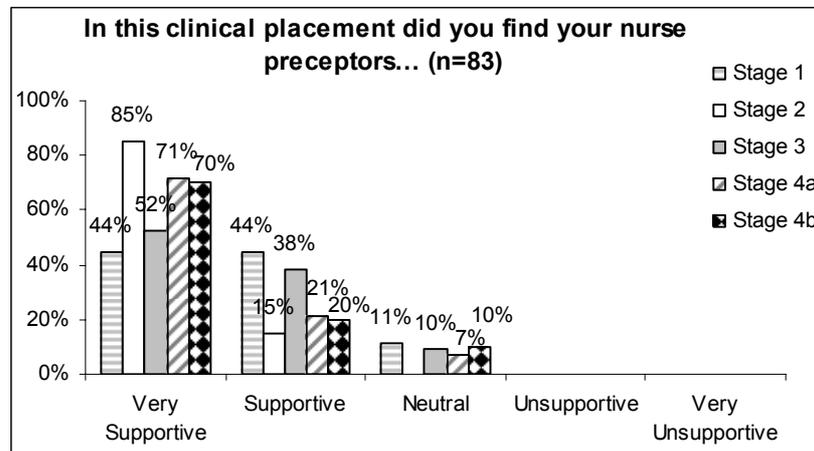
²² Note that the Likert scale axis (the Y axis) on the graph begins at 3 to allow differences between the series to be seen, which were clustered between 3 and 5. The Likert scale used in the evaluation tool was a 5 points scale, however all responses were over 3.

²³ See questions outlined above on pages 7 and 8.

²⁴ Those RACFs involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project.

sustained improvement regarding how supportive preceptors were across stages 2 to 4, when compared to Stage 1.

Figure 5.²⁵ Students' perceptions of the supportiveness of preceptors for Stages 1-4.



In Stage 2 **100%** of students rated their preceptor as 'Very Supportive/Supportive', whereas in Stage 3 the rate was **90%**.

Interestingly, when Stage 3 data were disaggregated and results from two RACFs which experienced problems during that stage were excluded²⁶, **71%** of students indicated that preceptors were 'Very Supportive', which is comparable to the results from Stage 4 (both 4A and 4B). Indeed, as demonstrated above, within stage 4, around **90%** of students on placement in the intervention facilities²⁷ in 4A and 4B indicated that preceptors were 'Very Supportive/Supportive', with **71% (Stage 4A) and 70% (Stage 4B)** indicating they found preceptors to be 'Very Supportive'. This compares favourably to the results from Stage 1 where **44%** of student reported their preceptors to be 'Very supportive'.

The same trend is also evident when considering how friendly students perceived their preceptors to be (see Figure 6 below). From Figure 6 it can be seen that in Stage 1, 61% of students indicated that their preceptors were 'Very Friendly'. This increased in Stage 2 of the project to 85% and in Stage 3, overall 62% of students found their preceptors 'Very Friendly'.²⁸ The Stage 4 results demonstrate a high level of consistency with the

²⁵ In some cases the figures across a total stage do not sum to 100% due to rounding of results to whole numbers by Excel.

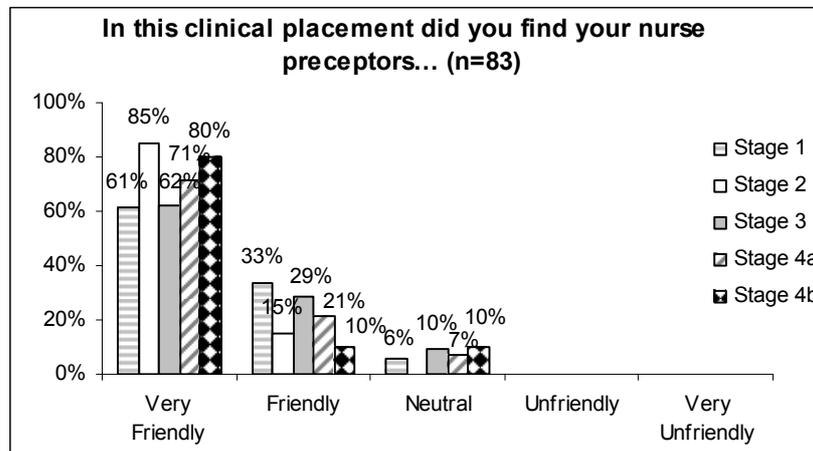
²⁶ For an explanation of this issue see Chapter 5, Living on the Edge, in the *Building Connections in Aged Care Final Report*.

²⁷ I.e., those who participated in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project.

²⁸ However, as in the previous case above, when the data from the two problem RACFs (no. 1-2) involved in Stage 3 of the project was excluded this percentage increased to 79%, which was more consistent with Stage 2 and 4 findings. See Chapter 5, Living on the Edge, in the *Building Connections in Aged Care Final Report* for an explanation of this.

previous two stages with 71% of students in Stage 4A and 80% of students in Stage 4B reporting their preceptors to be ‘Very Friendly’.

Figure 6. Students’ perceptions of the friendliness of preceptors for Stages 1-4.



Overall, these findings highlight that there was a high level of sustainability in the strategies implemented by the SNM to build preceptors’ capacity to support students and welcome them into the RACFs.

Changes in Career Intentions

A key interest of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project was to establish sustainable support structures for students on placement in aged care facilities with the aim of promoting recruitment and retention in the sector. In the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* an equivalent evaluation tool to that used in previous stages of the project was utilised to assess the change, if any, of student attitudes towards working in aged care. The focus of this part of the *Stage 4 Follow-up* was to determine whether the positive results achieved in stages 2 and 3 of the *Building Connections* project could be sustained. Additionally, the evaluation was extended to compare the results across the two stages (4A and 4B) of the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation*.

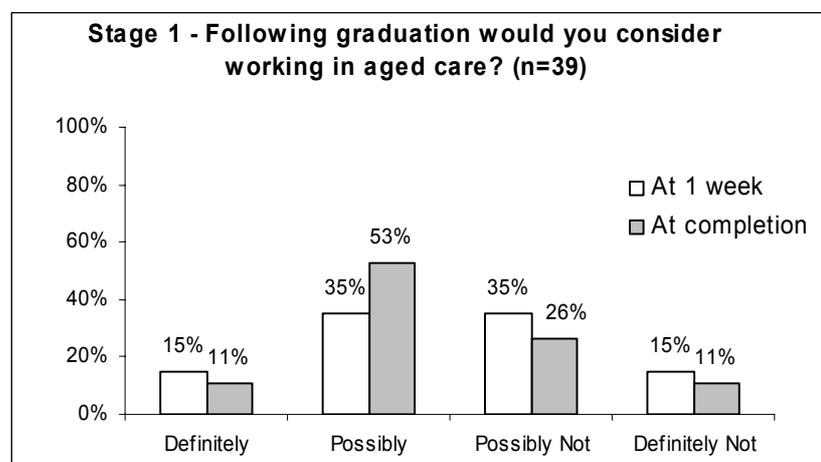
The findings below address the results from the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation* conducted with the intervention group students, and compares these findings with those reported by students on placement during Stages 1-3 of the *Building Connections* project. It should be noted that the evaluation tool used a four-point Likert scale to assess student attitudes towards working in aged care (‘definitely’, ‘possibly’, ‘possibly not’, ‘definitely not’). Throughout the analysis of the *Building Connections Project* and the *Stage 4 follow up projects* ‘definitely’/‘possibly’ responses have been grouped to represent a positive response and ‘possibly not’/‘definitely not’ has been considered as a negative response.

Stage I Findings

Figure 7 (below) demonstrates that within **Stage 1** of the project;

- on entry [week 1], 50% of students indicated a definite/possible interest in working in aged care following graduation [15% of responses were “definite” and 35% “possible”], and;
- at completion of the placement 64% indicated definite/possible interest, the amount of “definite” responses decreased to 11% with an increase in the “possible” responses to 53%.

Figure 7. Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation for Stage 1.



Stage 2 Findings

Following analysis of the Stage 1 data the project team recognised the potential of an effective orientation to positively influence student career intentions following graduation. Consequently, in Stage 2, student attitudes towards working in aged care following graduation were measured;

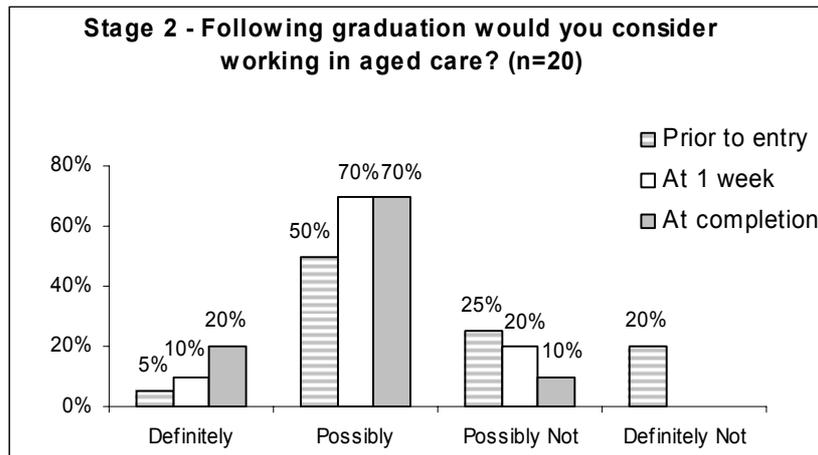
- prior to entry;
- following the first week of clinical placement (an additional evaluation point not included in Stage1), and;
- at the completion of placement.

Figure 8 (below) demonstrates that in **Stage 2** of the Project;

- prior to entry to the facilities 55% of students indicated that they had a possible/definite interest in working in aged care following graduation [5% definitely and 50% possibly];
- at the end of week one this increased to 80%, and;
- at completion 90% of students indicated a possible/definite interest. Of the 90% at completion the amount of “definite” responses increased to 20%.

It becomes evident that student attitudes towards working in aged care became more positive as their placement progressed. This is particularly evident when comparing student responses prior to entry, where 55% indicated a possible/definite interest in working in aged care to responses on completion where 90% indicated the same - this being a **64%** relative increase in positive responses.

Figure 8. Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation for Stage 2.



Stage 3 Findings

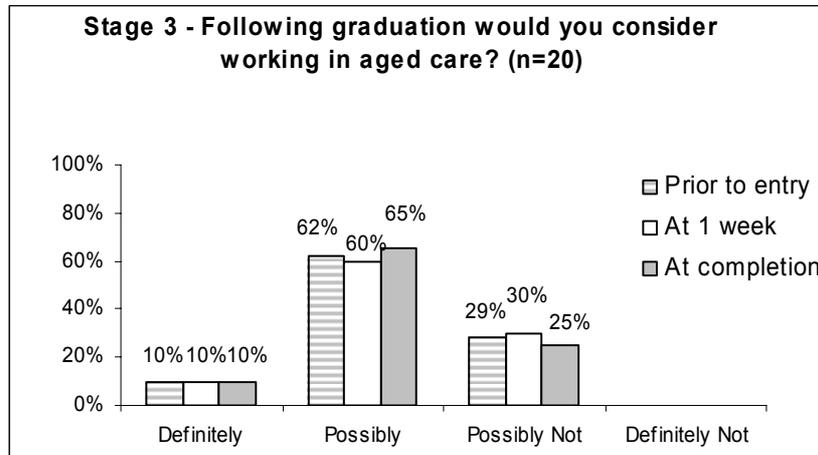
Within **Stage 3** of the project, when two facilities experienced significant problems in effectively supporting students²⁹;

- prior to entry 72% of students registered a possible/definite interest toward working in aged care following graduation (10% “definite” and 62% “possible”), and;
- similar figures were also recorded in subsequent evaluations conducted at the end of week one and at completion of the practicum.

As highlighted in Figure 9 (below), a positive shift in attitude was not evident.

²⁹ For an explanation of this issue see Chapter 5, Living on the Edge, in the *Building Connections in Aged Care Final Report*.

Figure 9. Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation for Stage 3.



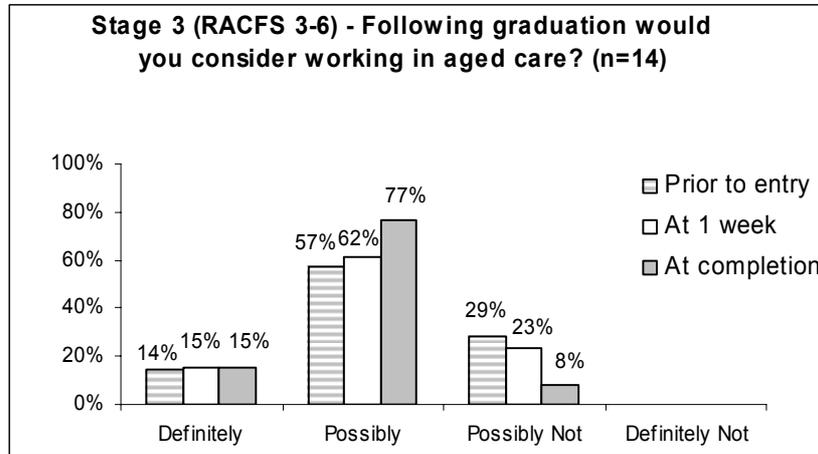
However, when the **data from Stage 3 were disaggregated**, and the results from students in the two problem RACFs in Stage 3 were excluded,³⁰ the results reflected the pattern of change seen in Stage 2. This is demonstrated in Figure 10 (below) which highlights that;

- prior to entry to the facilities 71% of students indicated that they had a possible/definite interest in working in aged care following graduation;
- at the end of week one this increased to 77%, and;
- at completion 92% of students indicated a possible/definite interest.

When comparing the Stage 3 student responses prior to entry (71% definite/possible interest) with responses on completion (92% definite/possible interest) a positive shift is again evident, with relative percentage increase in positive responses of **30%**. While Stage 3 results were not as positive as Stage 2 (64% relative increase), this results continue to demonstrate a degree of sustainability.

³⁰ During Stage 3 of the *Building Connections* project the two facilities experienced major operational problems, primarily related to staffing and a substantial expansion of bed numbers, which our evaluations indicated significantly compromised their capacity to effectively support students on placement. This finding highlighted the vulnerability of RACFs to operational changes and resulted in a recommendation being made in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* final report that in these circumstances students should not be placed in RACFs. On the basis of this analysis the results of the two RACFs involved in Stage 3 of the *Building Connections* projects were excluded from the analysis. For a detailed explanation of this issue see Chapter 5, Living on the Edge, in the *Building Connections in Aged Care Final Report*.

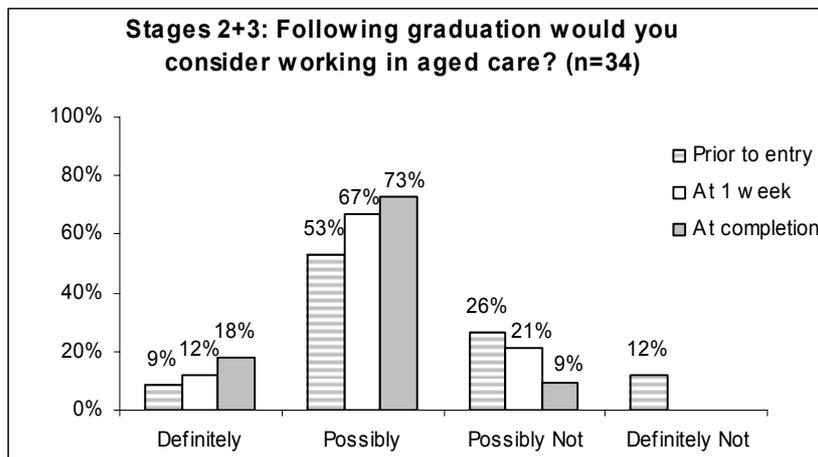
Figure 10. Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation for Stage 3, RACFs 3-6 only.



Stage 2 and 3 Combined Findings

When combining the results from stages 2 and 3 (using the results from RACFs 3-6 only), it can be seen that the number of students who would consider a career in aged care increased from 62% prior to entry to 91% at completion (see Figure 11 below). This equates to a relative improvement of 47%.

Figure 11. Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation for Stages 2 and 3 combined.



Stage 4A Findings

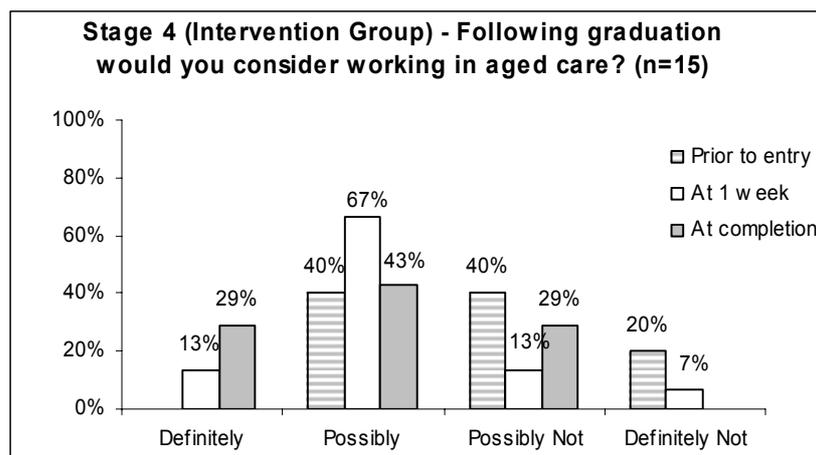
Within **Stage 4A**, it was evident that intervention group student attitudes toward working in aged care following graduation became more positive as their placement progressed, which is consistent with the findings from Stages 2 and 3.

As demonstrated in Figure 12 (below);

- prior to entry 40% of students had a ‘Possible’ interest in working in aged care (0% ‘Definite’);
- at the end of week one 80% of students had a ‘Definite/Possible’ interest [13% ‘Definite’ and 67% ‘Possible’] towards working in aged care, and;
- at completion the percentage of ‘Definite/Possible’ had dropped to 72% however the number of ‘Definite’ responses had increased to 29%, while the ‘Possible’ responses decreased to 43%.

Of particular significance, when comparing student responses prior to entry and on completion it is evident that there is a relative percentage increase in positive responses of **80%**.

Figure 12. Students’ interest in working in aged care following graduation for Stage 4A.



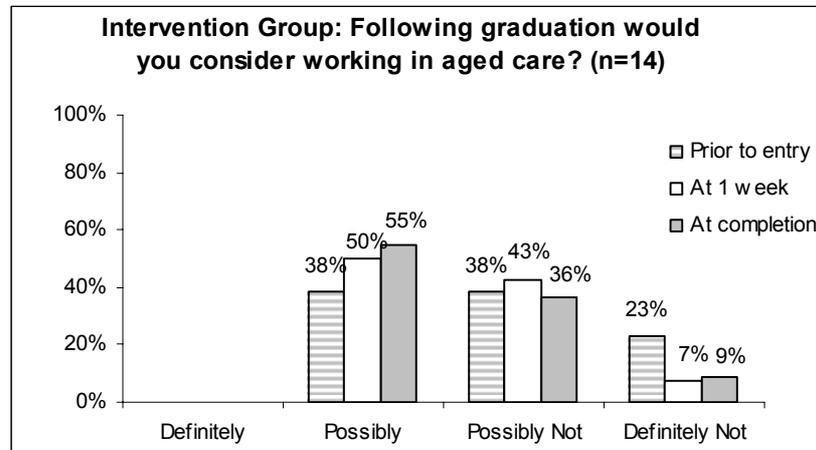
Stage 4B Findings

Within **Stage 4B** as demonstrated in Figure 13 (below);

- prior to entry 38% of students had a ‘Possible’ interest in working in aged care;
- at the end of week one 50% of students had a ‘Possible’ interest towards working in aged care, and;
- at completion 55% of student had a ‘possible’ interest.

While not as positive as Stage 4A, the results of Stage 4B continue to show a relative percentage increase of **45%** for positive responses, when comparing responses prior to entry and at completion.

Figure 13 Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation for Stage 4B.



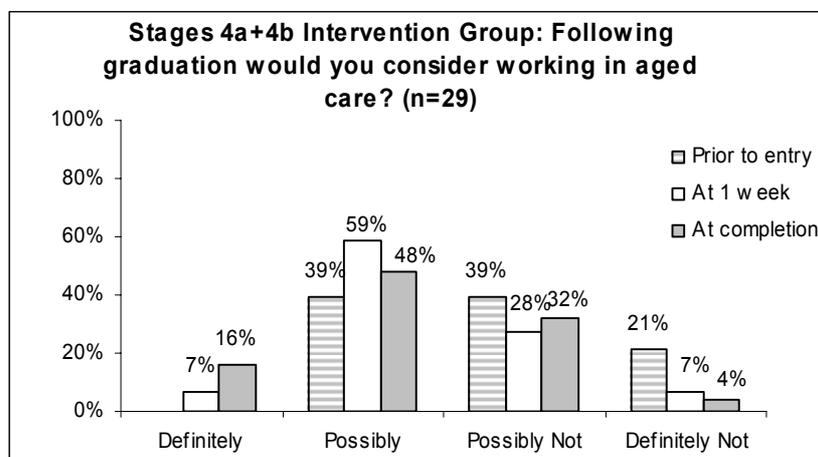
It is interesting to note that the students in Stage 4B of the project were equally as negative towards working in aged care prior to the commencement of their placement as those students in Stage 4A – where 60% of students in both groups responded that they would ‘possibly/definitely not’ consider working in aged care following graduation.

The Stage 4B cohort did not demonstrate as significant a positive shift as the Stage 4A cohort as no students indicated that they would ‘definitely’ consider working in aged care at week 1 or at completion of the placement. However, the results were still positive, as it was evident that students’ possible intentions towards working in aged care did continue to improve over the course of the placement, albeit to a lesser degree. These results indicate that overall students’ general disposition towards aged care did improve over their placement in Stage 4, consistent with the findings from earlier stages.

Stages 4A and 4B Combined Findings

Figure 14 below outlines the results of combining the data from the intervention groups in stages 4A and 4B. From this Figure it can be seen that the number of students who would consider a career in aged care increased from 39% prior to entry to 64% at completion. This represents a 64% relative increase in positive responses.

Figure 14 Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation for Stages 4A and 4B combined.



Discussion

When comparing student attitudes to working in aged care following graduation it is evident from the results of stages 2 to 4 that the structures put in place by the *Building Connections* research team and the SNM produced a sustained positive impact on student experiences. When combining the data from Stages 2 and 3 a 47% relative improvement in positive responses was observed. Despite a 12 month gap between Stage 3 and Stage 4 and no research support a relative improvement in positive responses of 64% was observed in the *Stage 4 Follow-up Evaluation*. (4A and 4B combined). This is strong evidence that the approach utilised in the *Building Connections* project has a high level of sustainability in positively influencing student attitudes towards working in aged care.

Findings – Evaluation 2: Intervention vs Control

This section of the report compares the findings from the intervention group (those on placement in RACFs previously involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project) with the control group (those on placement in RACFs not previously involved in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project) for both Stage 4A and 4B of the *Follow-up Evaluation*.

Student Career Intentions

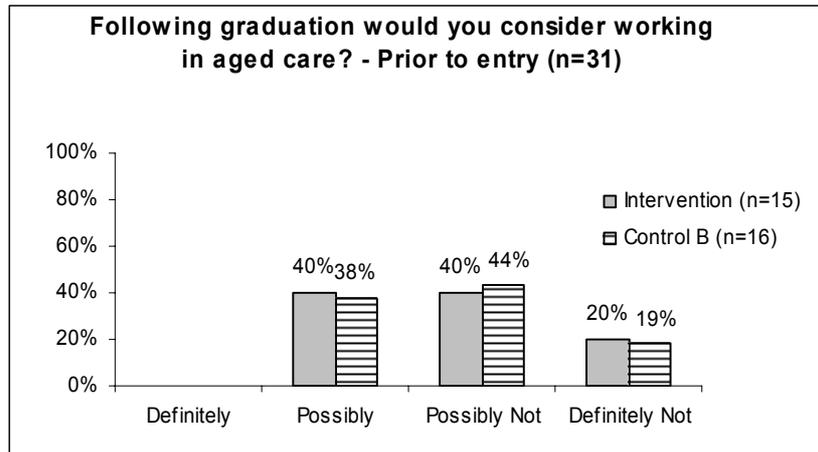
Prior to Entry - Stage 4A

Figure 15 (below) indicates that in Stage 4A;

- **40%** of the students in the **intervention group** ‘Possibly’ considered working in aged care prior to their entry to the RACFs, with 0% expressing a ‘Definite’ interest, and;

- **38%** of students in the **control group**³¹ responded that they would ‘Possibly’ consider working in aged care, with 0% expressing a ‘Definite’ interest.

Figure 15. Stage 4A Students’ interest in working in aged care following graduation: Intervention vs control - prior to entry.



Overall, around **60%** of students in the intervention and control groups indicated that they would ‘**Possibly Not/Definitely Not**’ consider working in aged care, with around **20%** of these responses being in the ‘**Definitely Not**’ category.

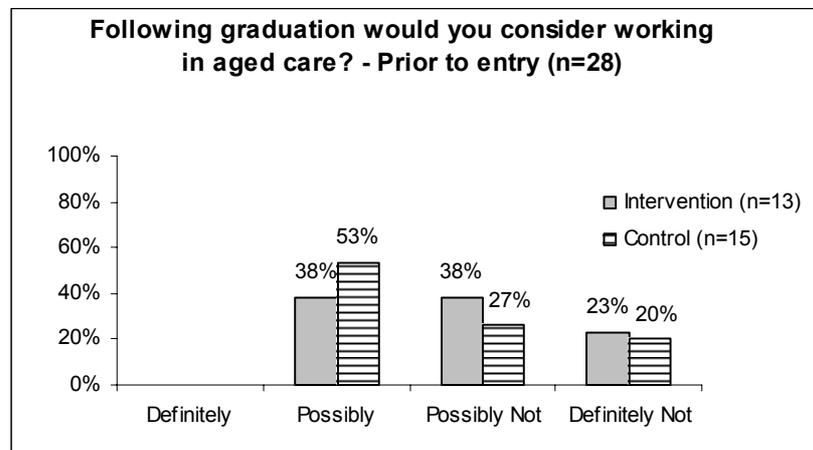
Prior to Entry – Stage 4B

As demonstrated in Figure 16 (below), of the students in Stage 4B;

- **38%** of the students in the **intervention group** ‘possibly’ considered working in aged care prior to entry (0% expressing a definite interest); and
- **53%** of the student in the ‘control’ group expressed a ‘possible’ interest in working in aged care prior to entry (0% definite).

³¹ Control group B (from Stage 4 interim report) was used in this analysis refer to Appendix 1 for further explanation.

Figure 16 Stage 4B -Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation: Intervention vs control - prior to entry.



From these results it is evident that the control group of students in Stage 4B was significantly more positive at the outset regarding the possibility of working in aged care following graduation. Indeed, it is apparent that prior to their entry to clinical placement overall the Stage 4B control group students had a positive disposition to working in aged care, while the intervention group students in this Stage were negatively disposed – see Figure 16 (above). Even though the groups were both matched in terms of prior experience in aged care, this shows that student attitudes towards working in aged care are variable.

Week One – Stage 4A

When analyzing the results from the week one evaluation it can be seen that by the end of the first week of their clinical placement, there was a positive shift in student sentiment in both the control and intervention groups within Stage 4A and Stage 4B of the *Follow-up Evaluation*.

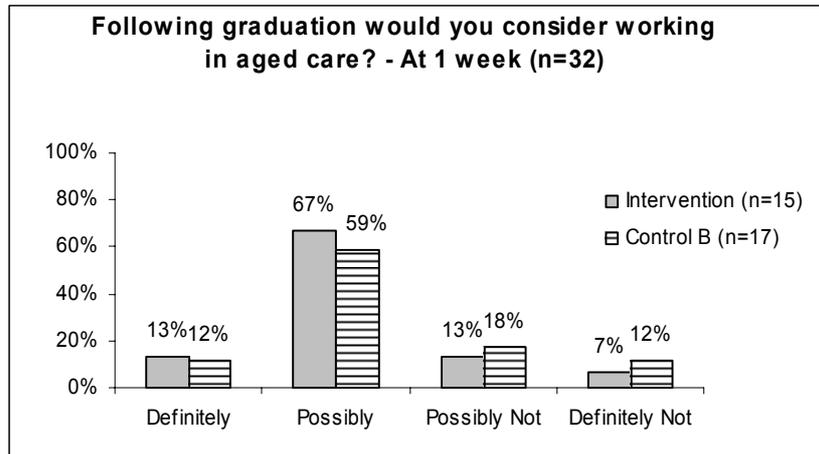
From the Stage 4A results (see Figure 17 below) it is evident that the student responses from the intervention and control groups were similar;

- for students in the **intervention group** the greatest shift was observed, where **80%** indicated that they would **‘Definitely/Possibly’** consider working in aged care, an increase from 40% prior to entry. Of these responses 13% were in the ‘Definite’ category, and;
- within the **control group** **79%** of students indicated that they would **‘Definitely/Possibly’** consider working in aged care, an increase from 38% prior to entry. Of the control group responses 12% were ‘Definite’.

Overall, at the completion of week one the decrease in control and intervention groups **‘Definitely Not/Possibly Not’** responses to working in aged care following graduation and the corresponding increase in student intervention and control group responses towards **‘Definitely/Possibly’**, indicates that both control and intervention groups found

the first week of placement a positive experience. This could be likened to a honeymoon period.

Figure 17. Stage 4A Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation: Intervention vs control - week 1.



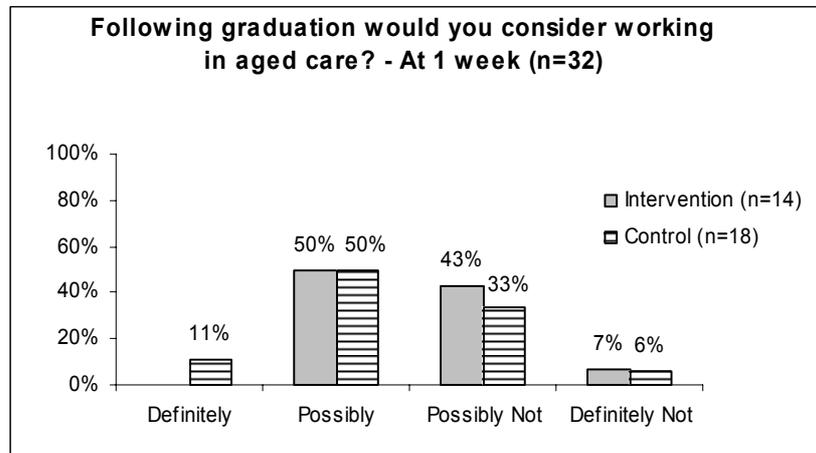
Week 1 – Stage 4B

The results from Stage 4B of the *Follow-up Evaluation* (see Figure 18 below) show that;

- in the intervention group 50% of students indicated a **‘possible’** interest towards working in aged care which was an increase from 38% prior to entry; and
- in the control group 61% of students indicated they would **‘definitely/possibly’** consider working in aged care following graduation, this being an increase from 53% prior to entry (an 8% increase in positive responses). Of these responses 7% were **‘definite’**.

Thus despite the intervention group having no ‘definite’ responses in Stage 4B a positive shift in attitude was still evident.

Figure 18 Stage 4B Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation: Intervention vs control - week 1.



For the Stage 4B students there was a relative improvement in positive responses at the end of week 1 of 32% for the intervention group and 15% for the control group. The ‘honeymoon’ period, evident from the Stage 4A analysis, was not as clearly defined in the intervention and control groups in Stage 4B.

The shift in ‘**definitely/possibly**’ responses to working in aged care in Stage 4B was not as significant as in Stage 4A. Within Stage 4B only 11% of the control group indicated that they would ‘definitely’ consider working in aged care at the completion of week 1 (0% were definite prior to entry), compared to 25% of the Stage 4A control group (0% were definite prior to entry). Nonetheless, it is evident that students’ negative disposition to working in aged care as signified by the ‘definitely not’ responses did somewhat improve albeit with an increase in the ‘possibly not’ responses.

At Completion of the Practicum – Stage 4A

At the completion of the practicum in Stage 4A it was evident that the positive shift in sentiment to working in aged care following graduation (observed when comparing the week one evaluation with the evaluation administered prior to entry) had been slightly eroded in the intervention group and significantly decreased in the control group. This indicates that in Stage 4A the intervention group showed a greater sustainability of positive sentiment to working in aged care following graduation than members of the control group. For example, as demonstrated in Figure 19 below, on completion of the practicum:

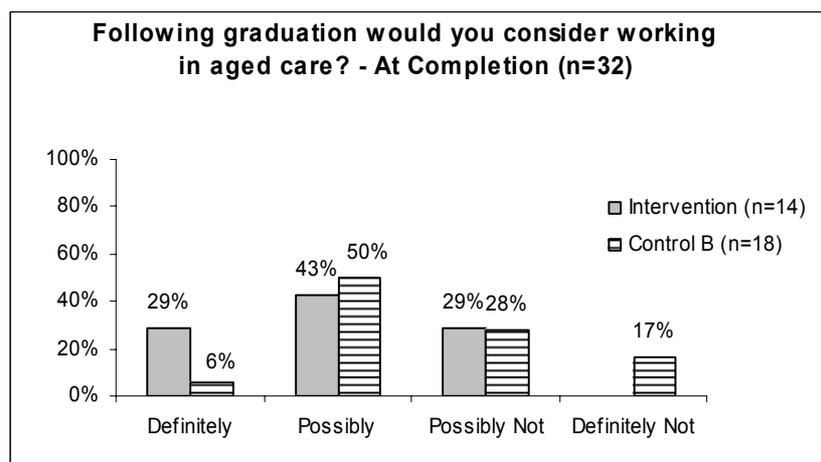
Within the **intervention group**;

- 72% of students stated that they would ‘**Definitely/Possibly**’ consider working in aged care following graduation — a decrease from 80% at week 1, and;
- **29%** of the intervention group students indicated a ‘**Definite**’ interest in working in aged care following graduation — an increase from 13% at the end of week 1 and 0% prior to entry.

Within **control group**;

- 56% of students indicated that they would ‘Definitely/Possibly’ consider working in aged care following graduation — a decrease from 71% at week 1, and;
- **6%** of students indicated a ‘**Definite**’ interest in working in aged care following graduation — a decrease from 16% at week 1.

Figure 19. Stage 4A Students’ interest in working in aged care following graduation: Intervention vs control at completion



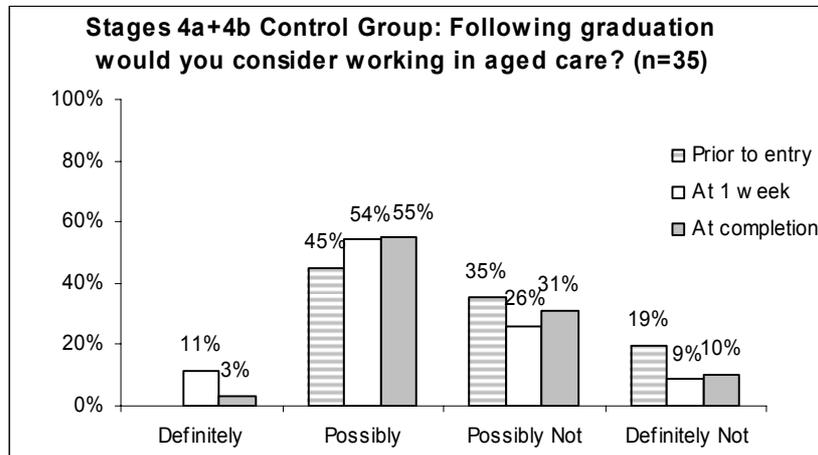
The most significant results from the intervention group was the increase in ‘Definite’ responses, which increased from 13% to 29% and the relative increase in positive sentiment when comparing the interventions and control group responses from prior to entry with responses on completion.

- Intervention group responses:
 - prior to entry 40 % (‘possible’) → 72% (possible/definite) on completion which equates to a relative increase of **80%** positive responses.
- Control group responses
 - prior to entry 38% (‘possible’) → 56% (‘possible/definite’) on completion which equates to a relative increase of **47 %** positive responses.

This result highlights that in Stage 4A the intervention RACFs were able to sustain a strongly positive sentiment among students across the duration of their placement.

When the results from the control groups in Stage 4A and 4B are combined a relative improvement of 29% in positive responses can be seen (see Figure 20 below). This can be contrasted with the combined intervention groups from 4A and 4B where a relative improvement of 64% in positive responses was observed (see Figure 14 above).

Figure 20. Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation: Stage 4A and 4B combined Control groups

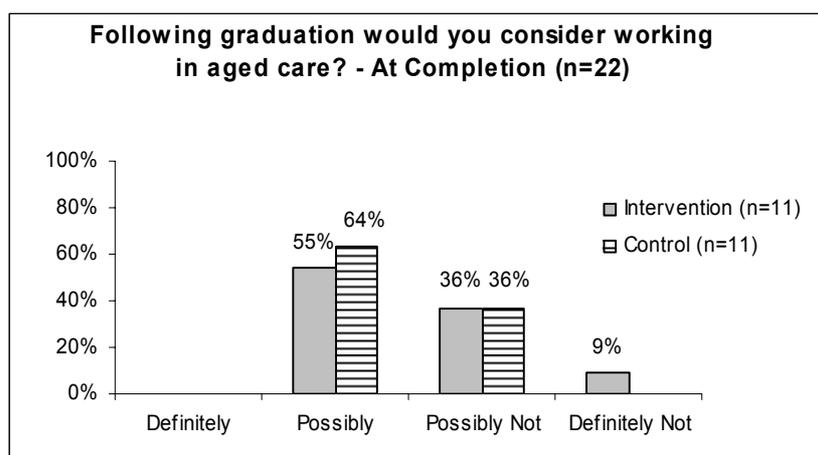


At Completion of the Practicum – Stage 4B

Data from Stage 4B of the *Follow-up Evaluation*, as demonstrated in Figure 21, indicates that at the completion of the practicum:

- 55% of students in the intervention group would also ‘possibly’ consider in aged care (an increase from 38%).
- 64% of students in the control group would ‘possibly’ consider working in age care following graduation (an increase from 53%).

Figure 21 Stage 4B Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation: Intervention vs control at completion



At completion of the practicum the results for Stage 4B highlight that the number ‘possibly’ responses for the intervention group had increased from 50% to 55%. In the

control group the responses were mixed as the number of ‘definitely’ responses decreased from 7% to 0%, while the number of ‘possibly’ responses increased from 50% to 64%. Overall, it appears that the increase in positive sentiment towards working in aged care, observed at the week one evaluation, was slightly diminished by completion of the placement, which is similar to the trend observed in Stage 4A.

When comparing the control and intervention groups, the intervention group was not as positive as the control group. However, the relative increase in positive sentiment was twice as great in the intervention group:

- Intervention group ‘possible’ responses:
 - prior to entry 38% → 55% on completion which equates to a relative increase of 45% positive responses.
- Control group ‘possible’ responses:
 - prior to entry 53% → 64% on completion which equates to a relative increase of 21 % positive responses.

Changes in Career Intentions – Significance of Change

Following the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project the evaluation instruments were modified to allow student responses to be anonymously tracked. The purpose of this was to test whether there was a statistically significant change in the distribution of student attitudes towards working in aged care between the data collection points (i.e. prior to entry, at week one and on completion). The test of marginal homogeneity was used (using SPSS) and the data set from Stage 4A and 4B was merged and filtered using the following constraints:

- Only responses from students who participated in all three evaluations were included (as evident from missing ID numbers).
- If a student participated in all three evaluations but made an error when answering the question regarding their future career intentions in aged care (e.g. leaving the question blank, circling multiple responses) they were excluded from this part of the analysis.

The Stage 4A and 4B data set was merged because difficulties in accessing students in Stage 4B (as discussed previously in the report) led to a low sample size compared to Stage 4A.

Table 3 outlines the results of analyzing the change in student attitudes towards working in aged care between each of the data collection points. From the table it can be seen that there was a significant change in **control group students** prior to entry when compared to week 1 ($p=0.317$) and week 1 compared to completion ($p=0.317$). However when comparing the control group prior to entry and at completion the change was not significant ($p=0.593$). This can be contrasted with the **intervention group students** which did not change significantly prior to entry compared to week 1 ($p=0.593$) but a significant change was observed between week 1 and completion ($p=0.480$) and prior to entry and completion ($p=0.414$).

The test of marginal homogeneity does not indicate the direction of change, however the results from the previous section indicated that in both Stage 4A and 4B the change in attitudes towards working in aged care prior on entry compared to completion in the intervention group was positive. These results are also consistent with the previous section where in both Stage 4A and 4B the relative change in positive responses was greater in the intervention group driving a significant change, while the relative change in the control group was much less (and non-significant).

Table 4. Change in distribution of student attitudes towards working in aged care (*=significant change)

	Prior to Entry → Week 1	Week 1 → Completion	Prior to Entry → Completion
Control Group	p=0.317*	p=0.317*	p=0.593
Intervention Group	p=0.593	p=0.480*	p=0.414*

Quality of Student Experiences

Information on the students' experiences of being preceptored was collected through the student survey³². Through the use of Likert scales, the student responses between the control and intervention groups were compared for Stage 4A and Stage 4B. Both Figures 24 and 25 (below) demonstrate that overall the intervention group responses regarding their experiences of being preceptored were more positive than the control group in both Stage 4A and Stage 4B.

Teaching and Learning – Stage 4A

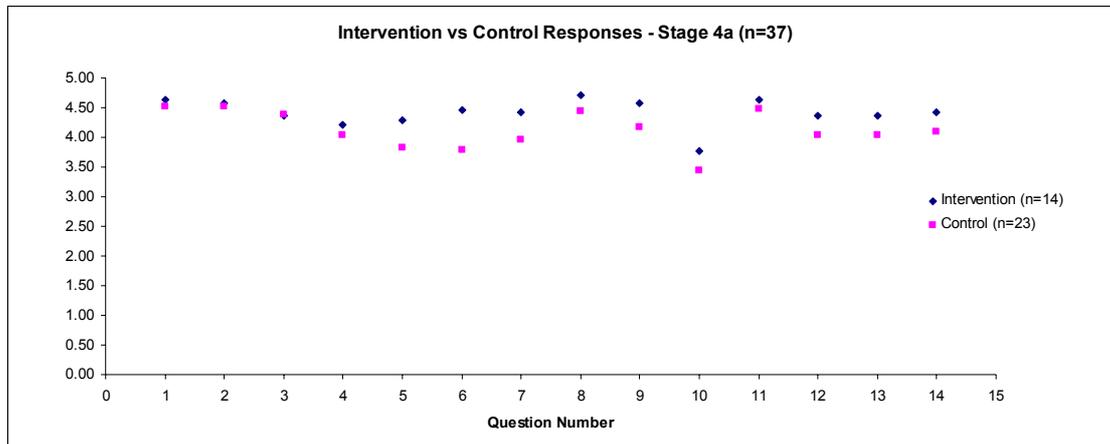
The survey questions largely relate to the capacity of preceptors to structure teaching and learning activities in the clinical environment. The greatest difference in responses between the intervention and control groups within Stage 4A was evident in questions 5 to 10. Figure 22 (below) illustrates that preceptors in the intervention RACFs had a greater capacity to facilitate student learning with respect to their ability to:

- Assist students in making decisions about their learning objectives.
- Assist students to identify strategies to meet learning objectives.
- Encourage students to be active learners.
- To actively look for opportunities to optimise their own teaching and learning skills.
- To gain information on the organisation of the undergraduate curriculum.

³² See point 5 and associated questions on page 18.

Students within the intervention group also rated their preceptors more positively than the control group, regarding the preceptors' ability to assess student skills and provide positive feedback.

Figure 22. Stage 4A - Comparison of students' responses to survey items on the experience of being preceptored: Intervention vs control.



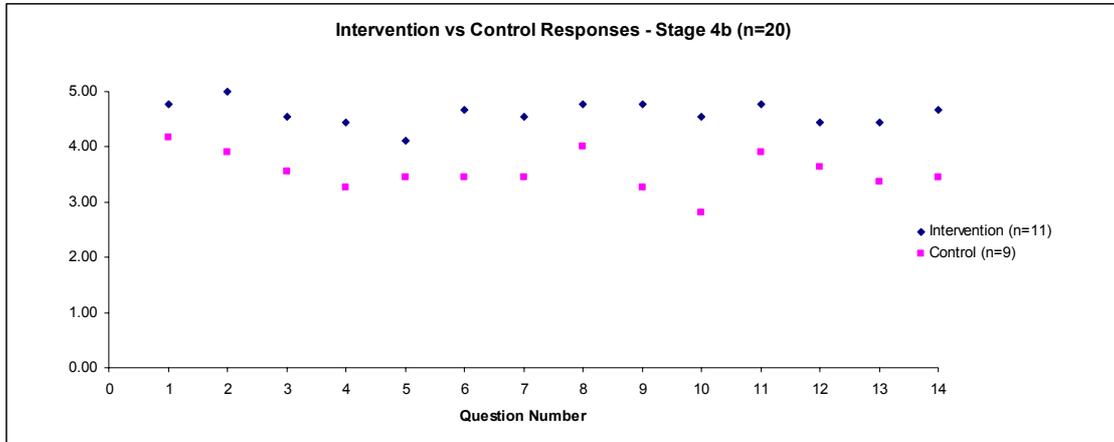
The above findings highlight the benefits of preceptors having the opportunity to explore and develop their practice as a result of their participation in the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project. Furthermore, the improved capacity of the intervention RACFs to facilitate teaching and learning is reflected in the shift in student attitudes towards working in aged care at the completion of their practicum as outlined above.

Teaching and Learning – Stage 4B

Similar results were achieved in Stage 4B of the project. As evident in Figure 23 (below), in Stage 4B the intervention group responses were markedly more positive than those reported by the control group students, across all 14 questions. Of note, the greatest difference between control and intervention group responses were reported across questions 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10. These findings indicate that the preceptors in the intervention facilities had a greater capacity to:

- Facilitate the acceptance of students to the unit (Q3).
- Acknowledge students' prior experience when structuring teaching and learning opportunities (Q4).
- Assist students to identify strategies to meet learning needs/objectives (Q6).
- Seek out opportunities to optimise student learning (Q9).
- Gain information on the organisation of undergraduate curriculum (10).

Figure 23. Stage 4B - Comparison of students' responses to survey items on the experience of being preceptored: Intervention vs control,



Supportive & Friendly preceptors – Stage 4A

Within both the control and intervention groups, students in Stage 4A rated their preceptors highly in terms of being friendly and supportive. This finding adds weight to the assertion made by SNM teaching staff, that their efforts to improve communication with aged care facilities, which were informed by the findings of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project Stages 1-3, worked to improve the support students received in all RACFs during subsequent placements (see Figures 24 & 25 below).

Figure 24. Stage 4A Students' perceptions of the supportiveness of preceptors: Intervention vs control.

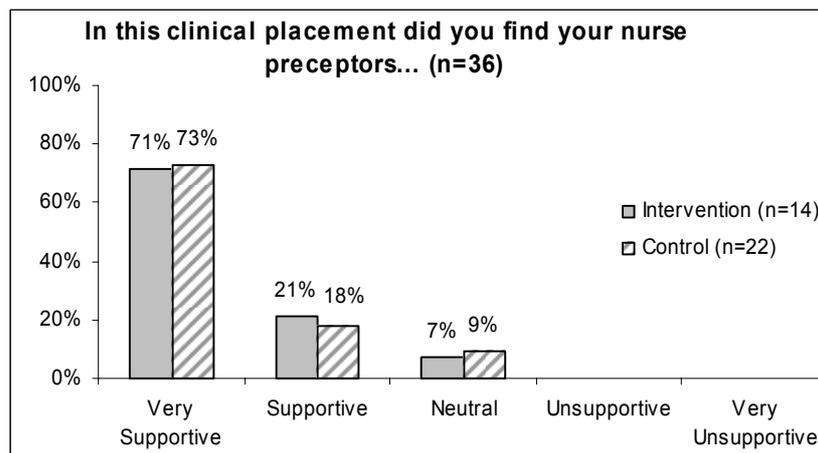
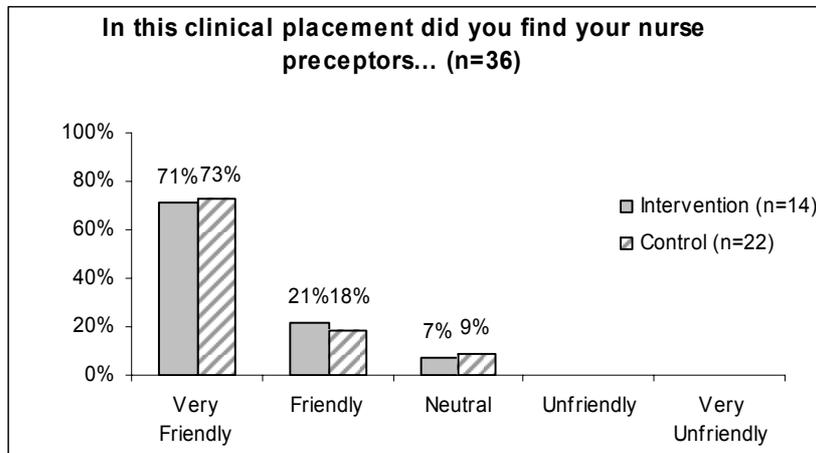


Figure 25. Stage 4A Students' perceptions of the friendliness of preceptors: Intervention vs control.



Supportive & Friendly preceptors – Stage 4B

Within Stage 4B students in the intervention group rated their preceptors significantly more friendly and supportive compared to the control group. This is consistent with student responses to question 3 on the student survey (discussed above), where intervention group students reported that their preceptors facilitated their acceptance onto the unit. Overall, in Stage 4B it is not surprising that intervention group students rated their preceptors more highly in relation to teaching and learning, as it is evident that students were made to feel welcomed and supported during their placement, this in turn facilitating an educative agenda. As demonstrated in Figure 26 and 27 (below) the intervention student groups rated their preceptors as more friendly and supportive than the control groups of students. **90%** of students in the intervention group rated their preceptors as “**very supportive/ supportive**” compared to **63%** of the control group students. Additionally, **90%** of the intervention group students rated their preceptors as “**very friendly/very friendly**” (80% very friendly) compared to **80%** of the control group indicating the same (50% very friendly). These results indicate that the changes and interventions made by the SNM within the earlier stages of the *Building Connections* project, to improve student placement continued to produce results within the intervention facilities which demonstrated a high level of sustainability. Furthermore, the generally positive nature of both the control and intervention group responses continues to add weight to the argument that the project also improved communication between the staff at the SNM and all of the RACFs where students undertook placement.

Figure 26 Stage 4B Students' perceptions of the supportiveness of preceptors: Intervention vs control

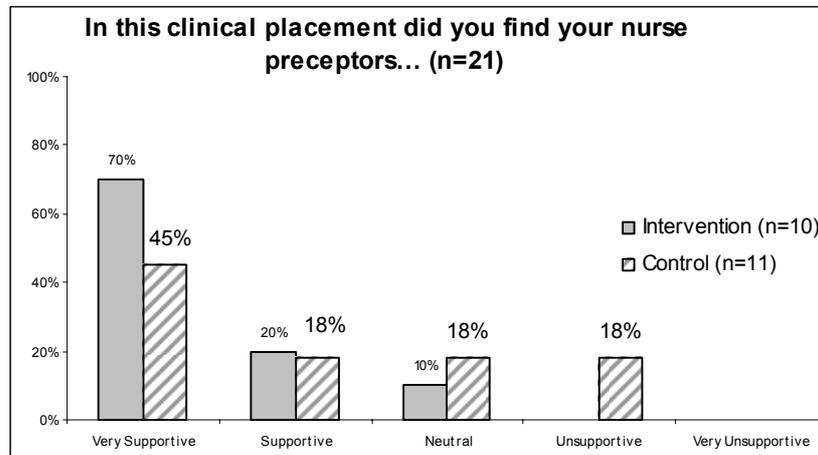
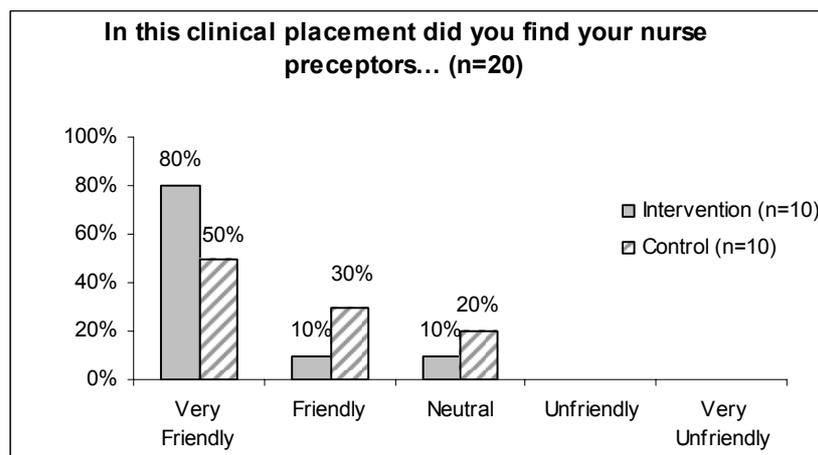


Figure 27 Stage 4B Students' perceptions of the friendliness of preceptors: Intervention vs control



Orientation Activities

Differences between the control and intervention groups are evident with respect to the activities undertaken by students during orientation. As Table 4 below highlights, in nearly two-thirds of the orientation activities students in the Stage 4A intervention group reported more positive results than the control group. This outcome was particularly evident in areas identified within earlier stages of the project to be of critical importance to orientation such as:

- Students being told how the shift would be organized – routines.
- Introductions to other staff.
- One person to coordinate the orientation.

Within Stage 4B the intervention group results continued to show a similar trend in relation to the above important areas. Even though comparison between the control and intervention groups in Stage 4B did not show as positive results as Stage 4A, the sustainability of the improvements within the intervention facilities was still evident. However, it is also apparent that the control group orientation activities have improved when compared to Stage 1 of the *Building Connections in Aged Care* project. This further illustrates the impact of the SNM efforts to improve the preparation of all aged care facilities that take students on clinical placement. The control group within Stage 4B while not as positive as Stage 4A did also continue to show some improvement compared to Stage 1. The less positive nature of the Stage 4B results overall indicates that when facilities are left without consultant input for large periods of time (ie 12 months), the quality of placement activities such can deteriorate

Table 5. A comparison of orientation experiences between the groups at each stage.

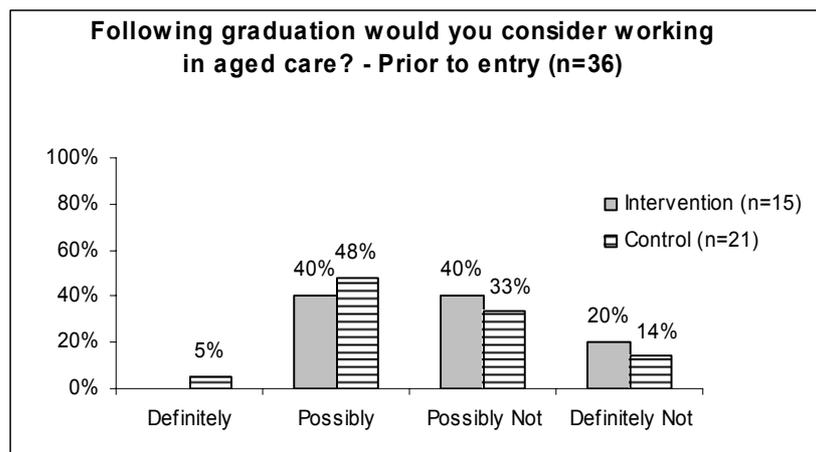
Question	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4a (Intervention)	Stage 4a (Control)	Stage 4b (Intervention)	Stage 4b (Control)
Did one person coordinate your orientation?	85%	80%	90%	100%	82%	86%	74%
Were you Introduced to the director of nursing?	80%	100%	79%	79%	79%	86%	63%
Were you Introduced to other RNs?	90%	100%	86%	100%	95%	93%	72%
Were you Introduced to ENs?	75%	100%	90%	93%	85%	75%	74%
Were you Introduced to ECAs?	79%	95%	81%	87%	95%	85%	84%
Were you Introduced to domestic & catering staff?	50%	95%	50%	86%	100%	58%	67%
Shown where to put your bag?	75%	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%	89%
Shown where the toilets are?	75%	100%	90%	100%	86%	93%	89%
Shown the tea room?	85%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	89%
Told how the shift would be organised - routines?	60%	85%	70%	100%	73%	77%	56%
Told when and where you will have meal breaks?	45%	75%	68%	87%	82%	79%	50%
Told what to do in the event of fire or emergency?	65%	100%	76%	73%	77%	79%	68%
Shown where the fire exits are?	40%	85%	57%	73%	67%	64%	58%
Told what to do when the phone rings?	20%	60%	5%	47%	45%	29%	32%
Told what the smoking policy is?	40%	65%	57%	80%	73%	57%	61%
Told where you can access computing?	65%	100%	76%	67%	59%	79%	47%
Told what books/resources are available and where?	30%	100%	81%	100%	77%	93%	56%
Told what times the shifts finish?	85%	100%	100%	100%	95%	93%	83%
Told what times the shifts start?	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%	93%	94%
Told what to do if you are running late or can't work that shift?	30%	95%	90%	80%	50%	86%	26%
Told what to do if I feel sick on a shift & need to go home?	20%	75%	62%	67%	45%	71%	17%
Told what to do if you need to go home early?	25%	70%	71%	60%	41%	57%	16%
Told what to do if you are feeling anxious or upset?	45%	95%	71%	73%	64%	64%	32%
Told who to contact if you hurt yourself?	10%	70%	43%	67%	50%	64%	37%
Told where you can access a telephone to make a call?	40%	80%	67%	67%	68%	64%	42%
Given an orientation to the unit/area (walk around)?	75%	100%	90%	100%	100%	100%	89%
Given an overview of manual handling and lifting policy?	50%	100%	57%	60%	82%	64%	58%

Appendix 1

Within the Stage 4 interim report the control group of students (control group A) consisted of students who had significant aged care experience. These students were Enrolled Nurses in aged care, prior to entering the undergraduate degree and ECAs who had worked in the industry for a number of years. The presence of these students within the Control Group A produced results related to student career intentions which were significantly positive, when compared to the student intervention group. For example prior to entry into the RACFs;

- **40%** of the students in the **intervention group** 'Possibly' considered working in aged care prior to their entry to the RACFs, with **0%** expressing a 'Definite' interest; and
- **53%** of students in the **control group** responded that they would 'Definitely/Possibly' consider working in aged care, with **5%** expressing a 'Definite' interest.

Figure 28. Students' interest in working in aged care following graduation: Intervention vs control prior to entry



Thus the presence of students who had previously been Enrolled nurses and ECAs for a number of years meant that these students were on average more positive about the prospect of working in aged care and more than likely would return following their graduation as Registered Nurses. However, when the control group A data was analyzed with the exclusion of those students with significant background experience (**control group B**) the findings remarkably were similar to the intervention group, none of whom also had prior experience in aged care.

Thus with the exclusion of the students who had a large amount of prior experience the intervention group and control groups were more evenly matched in their composition.

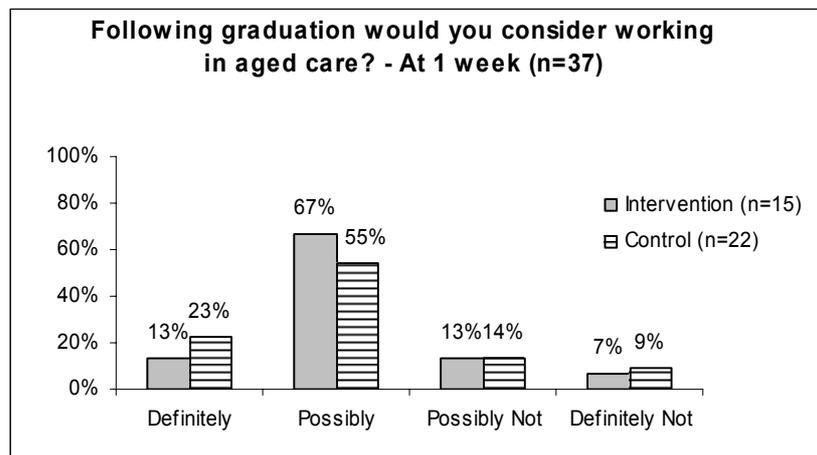
Outlined below are the career intentions for students within the control group A at week one of placement and at completion. In comparing these results to the control group B results represented within the body of this report, it is obvious that the students within

significant prior experience in control group A exerted a false positive within the results. For this reason the control group B students were used as the comparison group in this final report as this group is more evenly matched with the control group students in Stage 4B.

At week one of placement:

- For students in the **intervention group** the greatest shift was observed, where **80%** indicated that they would **‘Definitely/Possibly’** consider working in aged care, an increase from 40% prior to entry. Of these responses 13% were in the ‘Definite’ category.
- Within the **control group** **78%** of students indicated that they would **‘Definitely/Possibly’** consider working in aged care, an increase from 38% prior to entry. Of the control group responses 23% were ‘Definite’.

Figure 29. Students’ interest in working in aged care following graduation: Intervention vs control week 1.



However, within the control group, if the 5 students with prior aged care experience were excluded (**control group B**), the responses also demonstrated a positive shift with **74%** of this group of students indicating that they would **‘Definitely/possibly** consider working in aged care following graduation. Of note, the exclusion of the 5 students with prior experience in the sector results in a reduction in the percentage of ‘Definite’ responses from 23% (control group) to 15% (control group B).

At the completion of placement within the intervention group:

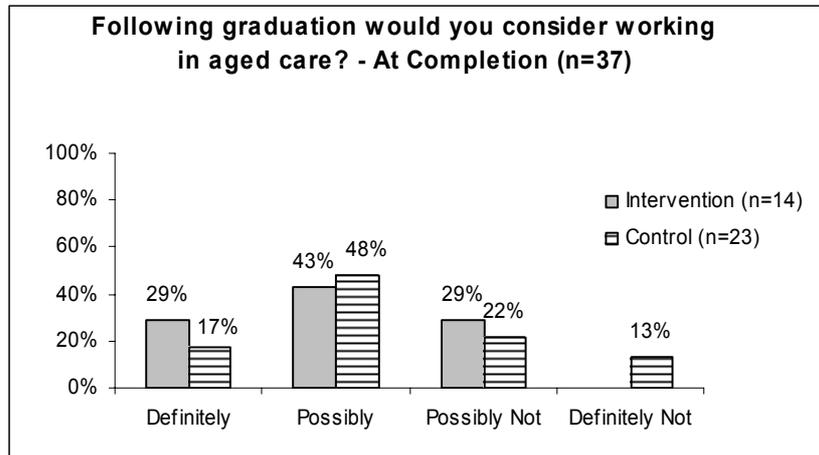
- 72% of students stated that they would **‘Definitely/Possibly’** consider working in aged care following graduation — a decrease from 80% at week 1.
- **29%** of the intervention group students indicated a **‘Definite’** interest in working in aged care following graduation — an increase from 13% at the end of week 1 and 0% prior to entry.

Within the **control group**:

- 65% of students indicated they would **‘Definitely/Possibly’** consider working in aged care following graduation.

- **17%** of students indicated a **‘Definite** interest in working in aged care following graduation — a decrease from 23% at week 1.

Figure 30. Students’ interest in working in aged care following graduation: Intervention vs control at completion.



However, within control group B, which excluded those students who had previous experience in aged care, the results were slightly less positive and far more negative to equivalent students in the intervention group (who also had no prior experience in aged care).

The following tables summarise the distribution of student attitudes towards working in aged care at the key evaluation points during the practicum.

Table 6. Distribution of student attitudes towards working in aged care among the intervention, control and control B groups prior to entry.

Prior to Entry				
	Definitely	Possibly	Possibly Not	Definitely Not
Intervention	0%	40%	40%	20%
Control	5%	48%	33%	14%
Control B	0%	38%	44%	19%

Table 7. Distribution of student attitudes towards working in aged care among the intervention, control and control B groups at 1 week.

At 1 Week				
	Definitely	Possibly	Possibly Not	Definitely Not
Intervention	13%	67%	13%	7%
Control	23%	55%	14%	9%
Control B	12%	59%	18%	12%

Table 8. Distribution of student attitudes towards working in aged care among the intervention, control and control B groups at completion.

At Completion				
	Definitely	Possibly	Possibly Not	Definitely Not
Intervention	29%	43%	29%	0%
Control	17%	48%	22%	13%
Control B	6%	50%	28%	17%