Abstract

This study contributes to the labour market research into nurse shortage in an Australian regional context. It indicates that supply decisions are influenced by family circumstances, attachment to regional life and characteristics of the profession, particularly the emphasis on caring. Aspects of nursing work, particularly workloads and working with competent people (as opposed to autonomy and career prospects), and conditions of work, particularly wages, protection from violence and flexibility of working time are more able to be affected by government and management. The study also suggests that a ‘strict’ approach to employment and work organisation tends to follow traditional medical treatment assumptions and lead to unnecessary cultural and systemic inflexibility. Generational conflict (‘older’ and ‘younger’ nurses) overlaid by opposition to the current system of nurse education (hospital-based and university-based) emerge as additional problems impacting on the participation of nurses.