



Registration of assistants in nursing

Assistants in nursing* have an important role in the delivery of nursing care in the health care sector, particularly in aged care. Registered nurses assess the competence of, supervise and delegate aspects of nursing care to assistants in nursing.

Titles include assistants in nursing, health assistants in nursing, personal care assistants or workers and personal carers. These employees provide direct care and aspects of nursing care to people who are aged, frail, have disabilities or illnesses. Assistants in nursing generally work in community and residential settings but some are employed in acute, sub-acute and primary health care settings.

The assistant in nursing role is now embedded in the provision of nursing care and, as such, should be regulated under the nursing framework.

It is the position of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation that:

1. Registration of assistants in nursing should be introduced under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009.¹
2. It is the responsibility of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) to protect the public in relation to the practice of nurses and midwives and this protection should be extended to include the work of assistants in nursing. The public should be able to rely on rigorous and transparent registration standards, codes of conduct, codes of ethics and standards for practice established by the NMBA to regulate the work of assistants in nursing. This level of public protection cannot be provided by individual contracts of employment between employees and assistants in nursing.

As these workers provide aspects of nursing care and work with, report to and are supervised and directed, by registered nurses and midwives, the NMBA should be the body responsible for registration.

3. Registration of assistants in nursing with the NMBA will ensure:
 - a. A standard minimum level of English language proficiency, knowledge, education and competence;
 - b. A national minimum standard of nursing care and the establishment of a mechanism for accountability;
 - c. The protection of the public;
 - d. The removal of the current inconsistencies whereby two different worker groups within a facility, doing aspects of the same job are not held to the same standards or level of accountability – thus leading to increased confusion for persons receiving care, practitioners and the community;
 - e. That legal action can be taken with regard to those whose conduct and/or competence is less than the required standard (such as: conditions applied to registration; suspension or cancellation of registration; or removal from the register to practice);
 - f. The establishment of nationally consistent professional standards for practice, code of ethics and code of conduct;

*The term assistant in nursing also refers to care workers (however titled)



- g. The application of fair and transparent assessment for those applying for registration as assistants in nursing;
 - h. The identification of a scope of practice for assistants in nursing;
 - i. The provision of a process to inform individuals receiving nursing care from assistants in nursing that the worker is competent to provide the care; and
 - j. Support for registered nurses who are working with assistants in nursing to delegate particular aspects of nursing care in a safe, legal and ethical manner.
 - k. Clarity for enrolled nurses whose role is to offer support and supervision to assistants in nursing to ensure care is provided as outlined within the plan of care and according to institutional policies, protocols and guidelines.²
4. Representation on the Board of the NMBA should occur as part of the legislative changes, so that assistants in nursing are appropriately represented and their specific needs are addressed by the national body.

Endorsed May 2005

Reviewed and re-endorsed November 2008

Reviewed and re-endorsed November 2011

Reviewed and re-endorsed February 2015

Reviewed and re-endorsed February 2018

Reviewed and re-endorsed February 2021

Reference

1. Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009, which was enacted on 1 July 2010. Available at: <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-2009-045>
2. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. 2016. Enrolled Nurse Standards for Practice. Available at <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards.aspx>

This position statement should be read in conjunction with the ANMF Assistant in Nursing providing aspects of nursing care position statement, available at: http://anmf.org.au/documents/policies/PS_AINS_Nursing_Care.pdf; the ANMF Delegation by registered nurses guidelines, available at: http://anmf.org.au/documents/policies/G_Delegation_RNs.pdf; and the ANMF Role boundaries in the provision of personal care, available at: http://anmf.org.au/documents/policies/P_Role_Boundaries.pdf.