



Education for nurses and midwives position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement sets out the foundations the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) considers governments, health and education providers, and professional bodies must put in place to support the education of nurses and midwives. It should be read with the ANMF position statements: *Professional practice framework and standards for nurses and midwives*; *Employing nursing and midwifery undergraduates*; and *Re-entering the workforce*.

2. Definitions

A **registered nurse** has successfully completed a Bachelor of Nursing accredited by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC) and approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). Registered nurses undertake initial and ongoing assessment of nursing care needs, initiate care, and supervise and delegate aspects of care to enrolled nurses and assistants in nursing.¹

An **enrolled nurse** has successfully completed a Diploma of Nursing accredited by ANMAC and approved by the NMBA. Enrolled nurses provide nursing care, working under the direction, delegation and supervision of a registered nurse.

A **midwife** has successfully completed a program of study accredited by ANMAC and approved by the NMBA. Through their program of study, they are educationally prepared to provide comprehensive maternity care (including the care of newborns) in every context of midwifery practice.^{2,3}

3. Context

Midwives and registered and enrolled nurses comprise 54 per cent of Australia's healthcare workforce and are crucial to the safety, quality and efficacy of the Australian health system.⁴

Modelling by Health Workforce Australia in 2014 predicted a shortage of up to 123,000 midwives and nurses by 2030.⁵

This makes it imperative that governments develop and implement a nursing and midwifery workforce strategy to ensure the nursing and midwifery care needs of the community can be met now and in the future. Governments must also work with health and education providers and professional bodies to increase participation and completion rates in nursing and midwifery studies.

¹ Assistants in nursing refers to all care workers however titled.

² In 2019, nursing and midwifery were recognised as separate professions under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009*. While most midwives are registered as a nurse and a midwife, the ANMF supports the right of nurses and midwives to determine whether they register as a nurse, a midwife, or both.

³ Midwives who meet the requirements of the NMBA Registration standard: *Endorsement for scheduled medicines for midwives* can apply for an endorsement to prescribe scheduled medicines. Midwives with this endorsement must complete additional continuing professional development (CPD) requirements relevant to prescribing. See the NMBA registration standards: *Endorsement for scheduled medicines for midwives* (available at <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards/Endorsement-for-scheduled-medicines-for-midwives.aspx>) and *Continuing professional development* (available at <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards/Continuing-professional-development.aspx>) <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/>.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2022. *Health workforce*. Available at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/workforce/health-workforce>. Viewed 16 October 2023.

⁵ Health Workforce Australia. 2014. *Australia's Future Health Workforce – Nurses Detailed report*. Canberra, Australia. Available at <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/03/nurses-australia-s-future-health-workforce-reports-detailed-report.pdf>.



4. Position

It is the position of the ANMF that:

1. All nursing care must be provided by nurses who are registered with the NMBA and all midwifery care must be provided by midwives who are registered with the NMBA.⁶
2. The Australian Government must develop a comprehensive national workforce plan for nursing and midwifery and ensure there are sufficient places in Australian universities and TAFEs in all states and territories to meet community need now and in the future.
3. Governments, health and education providers, and professional bodies must work together to provide:
 - accredited, accessible, flexible, and practical nursing and midwifery education
 - innovative modes of study that facilitate high rates of participation and completion
 - recognition of prior learning and clear articulation pathways between courses to encourage students to move from certificate courses to higher nursing and midwifery degrees.
4. Governments, health and education providers, and professional bodies must work together to ensure health services have the resources to support practical learning programs through:
 - workplace cultures that value learning and are positive and non-punitive
 - strong clinical leadership and structured learning opportunities
 - timely learner access to clinical nurse educators and preceptors
 - formal orientation programs and mandatory education and training
 - ongoing professional development opportunities
 - supernumerary time for learners and preceptors
 - mentorship and preceptorship training programs and debriefing sessions for all nurses and midwives who take on a preceptorship or clinical support role.

Entry to practice programs

5. All entry to practice programs of study must be accredited by ANMAC and approved by the NMBA.
6. Entry to practice education programs must provide opportunities for rural and remote students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to undertake the program of study as close as possible to their communities and to have clinical placement opportunities in their communities where appropriate.
7. Entry to practice programs of study for registered nurses must be at the bachelor degree level of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) and offered by a recognised Australian university. They must prepare students to meet the NMBA *Registered nurse standards for practice*.⁷
8. Entry to practice programs of study for enrolled nurses must be at the diploma level of the AQF. They must prepare students to meet the NMBA *Enrolled nurse standards for practice*.

⁶ This includes registered undergraduate students of nursing working under the delegation and supervision of registered nurses and midwives.

⁷ The NMBA standards for practice for registered and enrolled nurses and midwives are available at <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Professional-standards.aspx>.



9. Entry to practice programs for midwives must prepare students to meet the NMBA midwife standards for practice through multiple pathways such as:
 - the Graduate Diploma of Midwifery for registered nurses (12 months)
 - the Bachelor of Midwifery (three years)
 - the Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Midwifery (four years).
10. Postgraduate diploma programs for registered nurses leading to initial registration as a midwife must be no more than 12 months long.⁸

Curricular

11. Educational curricula should combine the theory and clinical experience required to ensure students meet their NMBA standards for practice.
12. A culturally capable nursing and midwifery workforce is essential to providing culturally safe services that meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Curricular must therefore include:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, culture and history and how the social determinants of health impact their health status
 - culturally sensitive care for people from CALD communities.

Clinical placements

13. All health and aged care settings providing clinical placements must have the resources, including staffing levels and skills mix, to:
 - deliver a quality learning experience that maximises student success
 - ensure all students are supervised by suitably experienced registered nurses and midwives
 - have clinical nurse and midwife educators available to support nurses and midwives in their clinical, educational and mentoring responsibilities.
14. To this end, the health service's nursing and midwifery education departments should develop and implement strategic education plans that align with their service plans and build the capacity and capability of the nursing and midwifery workforce to deliver evidence-based care.
15. Universities and health service providers must share responsibility for the emotional and physical health and safety of students and undertake risk assessments of workplaces and workloads to ensure students:
 - face reasonable expectations; work reasonable hours and have adequate days off
 - have appropriate debriefing and counselling support.

Transition to practice

16. Beginning nurses and midwives must be supported to transition from undergraduate study to practice through comprehensive orientation and formal transition to practice programs.
17. Transition to practice programs must be available in:
 - all health and aged care settings that employ registered nurses, such as acute care, mental health care, aged care, community care and primary health care

⁸ Longer postgraduate programs should be awarded at Masters level.



- rural, remote and metropolitan settings, in both public and private health care sectors.
18. Transition to practice programs must provide a structured framework for beginning nurses and midwives to consolidate and develop their skills and knowledge, and ensure access to:
- clinical nurse or midwife educators
 - experienced nurses and midwives as preceptors, supervisors or designated mentors
 - continuing professional development.
19. Beginning nurses and midwives must not be put in 'in-charge' roles.

Post registration courses

20. Continuing professional development and ongoing education programs must be available in all states and territories to facilitate career development and progression.
21. Post registration education providers must:
- provide an appropriate balance of theory and practice
 - consider the needs of students and employers when scheduling courses and ensure their courses are as flexible and accessible as possible.
22. Governments and professional bodies should ensure that all accredited postgraduate courses not conducted in the university sector receive appropriate academic recognition and have nationally consistent nomenclature, award levels and credit transfer arrangements.
23. Governments, professional bodies, employers and other health related organisations should encourage and fund nurses to undertake additional postgraduate study through scholarships and bursaries. However, scholarship and bursary sponsors must not make bonding to a particular employer or organisation a condition for awarding or receiving a scholarship.

Re-entry programs

24. Registered and enrolled nurses and midwives who do not meet the NMBA Registration standard *Recency of practice* must have access to affordable re-entry to practice programs accredited by ANMAC and approved by NMBA.⁹

Employment

25. State and territory governments should negotiate student employment arrangements during pre-service education and traineeships with all relevant industry parties including employers, unions, education providers and the NMBA.
26. Any nurse not employed or in a traineeship must remain supernumerary.

5. Position statement management

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⁹ Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. 2016. *Registration standard: Recency of practice*. Available at <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards/Recency-of-practice.aspx>.