



## Quality use of medicines position statement

### 1. Purpose

This position statement sets out the responsibilities the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) considers governments, health and aged care services, and registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses should meet to support the quality use of medicines under the Australian Government's national strategy.<sup>1</sup>

It should be read with the ANMF position statements: *Administering medicines and dose administration aids* and *Partnership prescribing by registered nurses and midwives* and the ANMF publication: *Nursing guidelines for the management of medicines in aged care*.

### 2. Definitions

**Medicines** refers to substances listed in the state and territory drugs and poisons legislation.

In Australia, the **quality use of medicines** refers to:<sup>2</sup>

- selecting management options wisely by considering the place of medicines in treating illness and maintaining health; while recognising there may be better ways to manage many disorders
- choosing the best available medicine by considering: the individual; the clinical condition; the risks and benefits; the dosage and length of treatment; any co-existing conditions; other therapies; compliance issues; and costs for the individual, the community and the health system as a whole
- using medicines safely and effectively to get the best possible results by monitoring outcomes; minimising misuse, overuse and under-use; and improving people's ability to solve problems related to medicines, such as adverse effects or managing multiple medicines (polypharmacy).

### 3. Context

Medicines are an important therapeutic strategy for treating ill health, preventing disease and improving health outcomes – but they can also cause harm.

As registered and regulated health practitioners, nurses and midwives have a key role in ensuring the quality use of medicines and are accountable for the doing so under the drugs and poisons legislation (however titled) in the state or territory in which they work.

Nurse practitioners and midwives with scheduled medicines endorsement may also prescribe medicines in accordance with their scope of practice and the relevant state or territory drugs and poisons legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government. 2002. *The national strategy for quality use of medicines. Executive Summary*. Available at: [https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022/04/national-strategy-for-quality-use-of-medicines\\_0.pdf](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022/04/national-strategy-for-quality-use-of-medicines_0.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government. 2000. National Medicines Policy. Available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-medicines-policy?language=en>.



#### 4. Position

##### **Responsibilities of government**

It is the position of the ANMF that:

1. All Australian governments must ensure that:
  - consumers have timely access to the medicines they need at a cost they, and the community, can afford
  - medicines always meet appropriate standards of quality, safety and efficacy.
2. All Australian governments must ensure that:
  - appropriate legal, statutory and educational frameworks are in place to support the role and scope of practice of registered nurses and midwives in administering, prescribing, supplying and adjusting medicines
  - medicine information that is easily understood is readily available to nurses, midwives and consumers in a variety of formats and languages.

##### **Responsibilities of health and aged care services**

It is the position of the ANMF that:

3. Health and aged care services must have:
  - clear policies and procedures in place for the delegation, prescription, supply, administration, storage and disposal of medicines
  - involve nurses and midwives in developing, implementing and evaluating such policies and procedures.
4. Health and aged care services must have systems in place and give nursing and midwifery staff the time and opportunity in their working day to:
  - implement and adhere to legislation, policies and procedures
  - meet and maintain professional standards and protocols for the quality use of medicines
  - identify and resolve problems in relation to the prescription, administration, initiation, and adjustment of medicines.
5. Health and aged care services must provide information and education to support nurses and midwives in the quality use of medicines and to avoid medicine administration errors, including clear and current information on all therapeutic substances used in their practice
6. Health and aged care services must establish and use consultation mechanisms between medical practitioners, pharmacists, consumers, nurses and midwives – such as health and aged care facility medication advisory committees – to promote the quality use of medicines.



## Responsibilities of registered nurses and midwives

7. Registered nurses and midwives, and enrolled nurses qualified to administer medicines, in consultation with pharmacists and medical practitioners, are the appropriate and qualified practitioners to administer medicines to people who are unable to self-administer their medicines.<sup>3,4</sup>
8. Registered nurses and midwives have a responsibility to:
  - use evidence-based information, resources and services to make decisions and take actions that enable medicines to be chosen and used wisely
  - help people to make informed decisions about medicines by providing evidence-based information, education and discussion
  - be aware of the risks and benefits of medicines, the possibility of not using medicines and the importance of a healthy lifestyle
  - maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills so they can use medicines appropriately and to their optimal effect
  - use their knowledge to question, as needed, the appropriateness of a medicine that has been prescribed.

## 5. Position statement management

Document type: Position statement	Review process: Federal Executive every three years
Title: Quality use of medicines	Last reviewed: November 2023
Endorsed: June 1998	Next review: November 2024

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<sup>3</sup> Enrolled nurses who have completed the education to allow them to administer medicines can do so in accordance with their qualifications and organisational policy. Those who are not educated to this level will have a notation on their Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) registration which states: 'Does not hold a Board approved qualification in administration of medicines'.

<sup>4</sup> Enrolled nurses not qualified to administer medicines and assistants in nursing (including care workers however titled) can only assist people to self-administer their medicines from pre-packaged dose administration aids. They must not administer medicines and must not be directed by employers or facility staff to do so. See the ANMF position statement: *Administering medicines and dose administration aids*.