

One way of doing things:

An organisation decides to undertake a project that has implications for the nursing workforce across Australia. It identifies the project stakeholders are itself and its member organisations.

On completion of the project, some of the work that now needs to be done is in the domain of other organisations that have not been a party to the work. There is no national uptake of the work at the "right level"; some states and territories adopt the findings while others do not.

A piece of work with local implications is part of an organisation's workplan. Prior to commencing the work it becomes evident to the organisation that a number of similar organisations across Australia are now considering the same issue and it is emerging as a highly visible national issue. The organisation decides to proceed with the work as a way of promoting its own profile.

An organisation undertaking work that has national importance for workforce and in particular nursing revises its stakeholder process and holds a series of special focus groups with the different sectors across Australia to demonstrate their commitment to engaging a wide cross section in the consultation phase. The groups are well attended but towards the end of the consultation it becomes evident that there are criticisms of the process as some groups felt isolated from each other and although numerous issues had been identified through the consultation there was no agreement on how these could be reconciled. There was some distancing of stakeholders from the consultation outcomes as a result.

A better way of doing things:

Before embarking on a national project a stakeholder analysis is undertaken that includes a validation step. A stakeholder analysis for the State/Territory that the project team is most familiar with is done and then other States/Territories are asked to identify who in their jurisdiction is "equivalent".

As part of the project methodology the stakeholders identified are openly available and a process for interested parties to register their interest(s) in the work is developed.

While doing "boundary scanning", an organisation identifies that an issue that it thought was local is in fact emerging in a number of areas. It uses its association and membership with peak bodies to confirm this and test out if in fact there is an opportunity to drive a coordinated national approach to the work. As part of this issue raising there is debate about what else is occurring and which sector/organisation is best placed to lead the work. The opportunities for collaboration and partnership for a "win-win" solution are central to the discussion.

Recognising that new strategies for broad consultation were needed to undertake a new project nationally, an organisation arranged a series of integrated and cascading stakeholder events that required the different sectors within each jurisdiction to come together. In these events the issues and potential solutions were worked through. Each session was used as a foundation for other consultation events. In this way, the state and territory issues were blended to form a national picture of issues as well as potential strategies that could overcome the barriers. The connecting and networking between sectors had simultaneously been achieved through the consultation process. There was considerable good will and ownership of the "problem" expressed by the stakeholders at the end of the consultation phase and willingness to participate in the next phase.

National Nursing & Nursing Education Taskforce (N3ET)

Principles for working together to achieve national outcomes

National Nursing and Nursing Education Taskforce
61 03 96166995
www.nnnet.gov.au

 Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council

A guide for organisations and stakeholders

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Principles for working together

This guide is a quick reference for organisations and stakeholders implementing national work in partnership with, or on behalf of the National Nursing and Nursing Education Taskforce (N³ET).

About the Work

N³ET is driving a national reform agenda in nursing

N³ET is responsible for implementing recommendations of Our Duty of Care (2002), the report of the National Review of Nursing Education, along with work from three recent Australian Health Workforce Advisory Committee nursing workforce reports and additional work on nurse specialisation.

This work encompasses a diverse range of issues such as skill mix and work organisation, recruitment, retention and utilisation of the current nursing and midwifery workforce, funding of clinical education, scopes of practice and national education standards - issues that have the potential to improve health and healthcare in Australia.

Our Endeavour

N³ET is committed to an enhanced and sustainable healthcare system through the promotion of

- professional visibility and pride
- quality education and regulation to nationally consistent standards and
- capacity building in practice, education and research for nurses and midwives across Australia.

Involving the Stakeholders

The outcomes of this work will impact differently on a wide range of stakeholders.

It is clear that a number of stakeholders have an interest in the outcomes of this work and want a say in how it is progressed.

Who are the Stakeholders?

- nurses and midwives
- governments and workforce planners
- regulatory authorities
- education and training providers
- professional colleges, national organisations, peak nursing bodies, and unions
- employers and service providers
- health workers and health professionals
- health consumers and the Australian community.

Working together

One group cannot do this work alone. To be strategic and successful, the stakeholders will need to join in the effort, make critical decisions, take action and support the work. To get the best outcomes, in some cases, it will be important for key groups to lead and take responsibility for aspects of the work.

We may not all agree on the best way to get things done or who should do the work, so it is important that all the stakeholders feel they have a voice and that their voice is heard. We should all agree that key to successful outcomes are:

✓ Consultation ✓ Communication ✓ Collaboration

Our challenge

At the moment, there are very few models for achieving national outcomes where there are so many different stakeholders involved.

To be successful, the stakeholders need to be confident that those participating in national work are employing sound and consistent processes and practices that reflect a shared commitment to achieving the best outcomes for nurses, midwives and for the Australian community.

Our goal in this work is to enhance the contribution that nurses and midwives make to health service delivery and to enhance health outcomes for the Australian community.

Principles

Transparency

Organisations that are transparent and open:

- clearly articulate each stage of the work and what it entails
- have processes and systems for ensuring timely consultation with all stakeholders
- make evident assumptions and data that underpin decisions,
- use clear and candid language to communicate with stakeholders.

Integrity

Organisations with integrity:

- demonstrate respect for differing views, and honesty and probity in dealings with stakeholders
- have processes for acknowledging and managing personal and professional interests
- respect ownership of intellectual property
- make informed decisions in light of consultation, data and best practice
- reflect on decisions to ensure they are justified.

Accountability

Accountable organisations:

- acknowledge the range of stakeholders who will be affected by the outcomes of their work.
- are subject to external scrutiny and are responsive to critique and feedback
- deliver agreed outcomes for the work that is undertaken
- have robust and consistent processes for doing the work
- report on progress and the outcomes of work.

Stewardship

Stewardship infers:

- the exercise of powers on behalf of others in undertaking national work
- pursuit of outcomes that benefit the health of all Australians
- resources are used wisely to ensure the best possible outcomes
- stakeholder views and interests are given due consideration.

Leadership

Leaders in national work

- align their efforts with the vision for a national health workforce and strive to improve health outcomes for all Australians
- work in concert with other stakeholders and other leaders to progress the work
- are strategic in seizing opportunities to advance work they are responsible for.