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N³ET NEWSLETTER



Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council

The N³ET Taskforce is committed to building an enhanced and sustainable healthcare system through the promotion of professional visibility and pride, quality education and regulation to nationally consistent standards and capacity in practice, education and research for all nurses and midwives across Australia.

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A framework for national consistency

On March 30th 2005 N³ET hosted a National Scopes of Practice Symposium at the Melbourne Convention Centre in Melbourne.

More than 70 representatives from key stakeholder groups across Australia, including nurses and midwives, professional bodies, unions, education providers, governments and policy makers, employers and consumers attended the Symposium, which was the second element in a staged program of activity to implement [Recommendation 4: Nationally consistent scopes of practice](#) of the National Review of Nursing Education (2002): *Our Duty of Care* report.

The Symposium provided a timely opportunity for these stakeholder groups to come together, share their different views and contribute to meaningful dialogue on the complexities and challenges involved in conceptualising a national framework for scopes of practice for nurses and midwives in Australia.

Throughout the day as participants engaged in varied program of activities, a range of views on important issues was expressed and served to demonstrate the competing agendas that provide the context for this complex work.

A number of important themes arose from the proceedings. The first is that right now there is an opportunity for the nurses and midwives to demonstrate leadership in the health workforce by tackling difficult issues and demonstrating willingness to reform from within.

The second is that consumers must be central to any consideration of scopes of practice for the future. Consumers want a say and they want to be involved in the process and in determining the outcomes.

"I congratulate the participants on their willingness to engage with the activities ... the Taskforce certainly values their constructive ideas, reflections and contributions to the dialogue"

Adjunct Professor Belinda Moyes
Chair, National Nursing and Nursing Education Taskforce

The Symposium has been instrumental in informing the development of a **Blueprint for National Action** (see page 2 for further information), which incorporates a number of priority action areas identified by participants throughout the proceedings. The Blueprint will drive the next stages of the work.

More information on the Symposium is available in the Report of the Proceedings available on the N³ET website (www.nnnet.gov.au).

Recommendation 4 - *Our Duty of Care* (2002), p19

To promote a professional Scope of Practice for nurses and greater consistency across Australia:

a) a nationally consistent framework should be developed that allows nurses to work within a professional Scopes of Practice, including administration of medications by enrolled nurses

b) to facilitate this development, all Commonwealth, state and territory legislation and regulations that impact on nursing should be reviewed and reformed as required



"Breaking the Ice"

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PROJECT SPOTLIGHT - REC 4

Blueprint for National Action

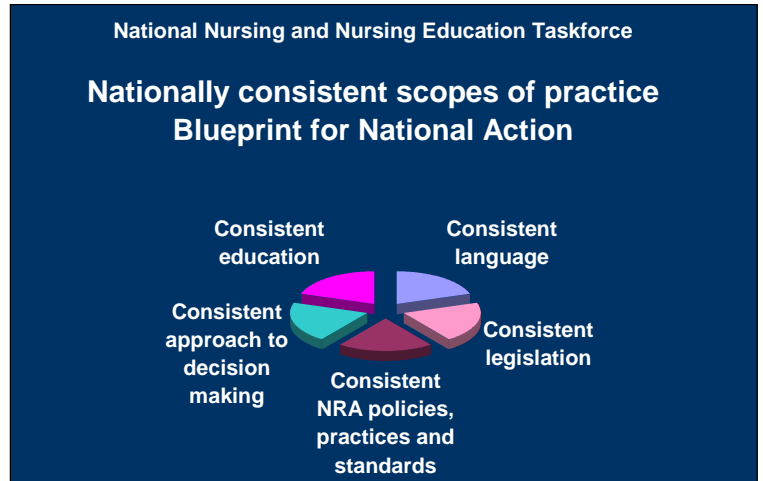
As the work on **Recommendation 4: Nationally consistent scopes of practice** progresses, it is becoming increasingly clear that achieving national consistency will be a complex and a long process. The eight States and Territories have different legislation and the Nurse Regulatory Authorities have eight different approaches to managing regulation of the profession. There are also numerous professional and special interest groups both national and local, and other stakeholder groups such as employers and unions that want to inform future directions.

What is clear though, is that there are there are inconsistencies and anomalies in aspects of regulation, practice and education that we can begin to address immediately.

The participants at the National Scopes of Practice Symposium agreed that greater consistency in scopes of practice would benefit, not just nurses and midwives but employers, workforce planners, education providers and importantly, health consumers.

During the course of the day, participants identified a number of priority action areas where work is needed to achieve greater consistency. These are all areas where successful outcomes will be dependent on a number of stakeholders working effectively together to strategically coordinate activity across Australia.

The priority action areas have been formed into a Blueprint for National Action. More about the Blueprint is available on the N³ET website (www.nnet.gov.au).



Action Alliance

It is evident from discussions at the Scopes of Practice Symposium that the priority action areas are highly complex and, to be successful strategically coordinated and collaborative action will be required.

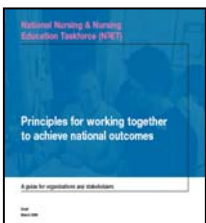
In recognition of the complexity of task ahead, N³ET has formed a landmark **Alliance** with the **Australian & New Zealand Council of Chief Nurses**, the **Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council** and the **Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia & New Zealand)**.

The Alliance is focused on progressing action on the priority areas identified in the **Blueprint for National Action**, areas of work, which will result in greater national consistency in dimensions of regulation, practice and education for nurses and midwives.

Work has already commenced or is planned in some areas and the Alliance members are currently discussing who will take the lead on each arm.

More about the work of the Alliance will be available as the Blueprint is further developed.

Working effectively together



N³ET is all too aware that one group cannot do this work alone and is a vocal advocate of working in partnership with the stakeholders – of strategically coordinating activity and sharing or pooling resources to progress work in areas of mutual interest and to achieve outcomes with broad benefit.

Through our consultations with key groups around Australia, N³ET is aware that a broad range of stakeholders, including nurses and midwives, professional bodies, unions, education providers, governments, employers and consumers, is interested in matters of national consistency and wants a say in informing the way forward.

A challenge that faces us as we forge ahead is to find ways of working that expedite the work, yet still provide opportunities for stakeholders to get involved. We have to find ways of working that give the stakeholders confidence that work has been carried out with probity and in the interests of enhancing the contribution that nurses and midwives make to health service delivery and health outcomes for the Australian community.

The participants at the National Scopes of Practice Symposium discussed some of these issues and endorsed a draft set of **Principles for working together to achieve national outcomes**. These include:

Transparency

Stewardship

Integrity

Leadership

Accountability

The participants agreed that adoption of the principles would facilitate cooperative and collaborative activity undertaken on behalf of the broader nursing and midwifery community, and would facilitate effective consultation, communication and collaboration with stakeholders.

A copy of the principles can be downloaded from our website (www.nnet.gov.au).



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT - RECS 8 & 9

Rec 8: Research & Research Training

Research is an important professional activity. Research findings extend and refine the body of nursing/midwifery knowledge and provide evidence to support the efficacy and contribution of professional practice to health care and health outcomes.

Research training in Masters and Doctoral programs in the higher education sector is one of the ways nurses and midwives develop their research skills and begin to contribute to professional research.

The Taskforce has commenced two pieces of work to implement Recommendation 8 from the National Review of Nursing Education (2002): *Our Duty of Care* report, which aims to augment the research capacity of the disciplines through firstly augmenting the numbers of nurses/midwives in research training, and secondly by developing national priorities for nursing/midwifery research.

We are currently undertaking an audit of Research Training Scheme places and Australian Postgraduate Scholarships for nurses and midwives to see if targets identified in *Our Duty of Care* will be reached by 2008. Although data collection is not complete, it is evident that this is a complex issue, and that there are multiple factors that influence whether nurses/midwives engage in research training through higher education. Understanding these issues will assist us in identifying where we can intervene to strengthen the capacity of nursing schools/departments to support research training and to optimise opportunities for nurses/midwives to enter research-training programs. The Taskforce will be reporting the findings of this audit to Health and Education Ministers.

Nursing and midwifery are fledgling disciplines in academia. As such, we are still developing a research culture both in higher education and clinical practice settings, and have a high proportion of early career researchers. At the same time, there is increasing pressure from funding agencies to demonstrate outcomes for publicly funded research and nurses/midwives are required to compete for research dollars.

The Health Ministers have supported Recommendation 8, which calls for **national research priorities** to guide direction and investment in nursing and midwifery research as we move into the future.

To develop these priorities, the Taskforce will be seeking the views and input of nurses and midwives as well as other stakeholders with interest in the nursing/midwifery workforce, management of health issues and health service delivery. The State/Territory Health and Education Forums will provide an opportunity for stakeholders from each jurisdiction to engage with the process and inform the outcomes.

Rec 9: Image of Nursing

At present in Australia there are no industry standards to guide the way nurses and midwives are portrayed in various forms of media. Yet, images of nurses and midwives in the public domain influence public and professional regard for, and understanding of, nursing and midwifery practice and the contribution these disciplines make to health service and health outcomes in Australia.

The National Review of Nursing Education acknowledged the work of jurisdictions in promoting positive images of nursing and midwifery, and recommended that work be undertaken to bring together the various campaigns in a way that would be cost effective, sustainable and tailored to meet local needs.

As part of this work, N³ET is conducting a round of consultation with nurses and midwives across Australia to develop a set of principles to promote images of nursing and midwifery that are positive, contemporary and which reflect the diversity of roles and responsibilities in the many health services and setting where they are employed.

The Taskforce commenced its consultations with a workshop to develop the principles at the **Royal College of Nursing, Australia (RCNA) Annual Conference** held 6-8 July 2005 in Glenelg, SA. This was a wonderful opportunity to hear contributing views and to receive input from conference attendees from across Australia.

There will be more opportunities for interested people to have a say through the State/Territory Health and Education Forums (see below).

It is anticipated that there will be wide spread support throughout the nursing and midwifery community and the health service sector for the principles and that they will apply to the development of image banks, advertising standards, career promotion activities/campaigns, and recruitment/retention initiatives and journalism. The guidelines will also provide a benchmark for examining and critiquing images used by other groups to portray nursing and midwifery, and to provide a platform for mounting campaigns to fight inappropriate representations.

We look forward to your input.

State/Territory Health and Education Forums Dates for Recommendations 8 and 9

	Location	Date
ACT	TBA	8 August 2005
NSW	Sydney	15 Aug 2005
NT	Alice Springs	23 Aug 2005 (2 nd day of a 2 day Forum)
QLD	TBA	19 October
SA	TBA	11 October
TAS	TBA	18 Aug 2005
VIC	TBA	TBA
WA	Perth	30 August 2005 – Rec 9: Image 7 Sept 2005 – Rec 8: Research

[Link to further information on Forums from the N3ET website](#)



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT - REC 25

After a period off a nursing register, nurses are often directed to undertake a re-entry course.

Did you know that requirements to restore a name to a register or roll vary across Australia?

Programs designed for nurses to demonstrate competency to re-register vary, even within a State or Territory in terms of length, cost, location, provider and content.

These differences and more are explored in the N³ET review of Re-entry Programs for Nurses and Midwives - see story below....



**Re-registration?
Re-entry?**

Recommendation 25 (e) university-based units for re-entry to nursing should be covered by a loans scheme

Like many contemporary professions, nurses leave and re-enter the nursing workforce at different stages of their careers. All nurses who have not practised or maintained their registration in over five years must prove competence prior to regaining registration/enrolment.

While legislation is mostly silent regarding how a nurse or midwife can demonstrate competence, Nurse Regulatory Authorities are required to ensure that registering/enrolling nurses meet the competency standards. With the exception of New South Wales, most nurses must complete a **re-entry to practice program** if the lapse in registration is greater than five years. Each State and Territory has different criteria for accrediting re-entry programs leading to variations in program structure (re-entry course/supervised practice/tests); costs and funding (government sponsorship/ user pays); length (weeks/months/years); providers of re-entry programs (universities/hospitals/health services); and content (theoretical/clinical/simulated tests).

A few examples of differences in **re-entry programs** are:

- In Tasmania, options include a twelve month university 're-entry program', and a health service provided 're-entry program' that is self-paced.
- The Nurses Board of South Australia accredits two universities to run registered nurse and midwifery 're-entry programs', six different TAFE's provide 're-entry' for enrolled nurses and a 'competency assessment service' is available to all categories of nurses.
- In Victoria, a registered nurse has the choice of a hospital or health service based 're-entry program' or a 'period of supervised practice' so long as their registration has not lapsed for over ten years, otherwise a university based 're-entry program' is needed. There are over a hundred providers of programs in Victoria.

A few examples of differences in funding include:

- In Western Australia, a registered nurse can complete a cost neutral 're-entry program' in a public hospital to meet the requirements for re-registration/re-enrolment or, pay full fees for a one-year university based 're-entry' program.
- In the ACT, a registered midwife can complete a 'period of supervised practice', pay the full fee up front and be reimbursed 50% upon completion of the program.
- In Queensland there is a 'competency assessment service', which assesses the individuals learning needs and assigns education modules dependent on test results. The 'competency assessment service' is supported by a scholarship fund available to all nurses and midwives.

N³ET is concerned with issues of national consistency. The differences in the way NRAs deal with re-entry to practice is explored in the N³ET *Re-entry Programs for Nurses and Midwives* review. The review examines pathways and support for re-entry specific to nurses who have had a lapse in registration for over five years. In particular, it examines the potential need for a commonwealth funded loans scheme for university-based units for **re-entry to practice programs**.

This review is a follow on to a report on Recommendation 25: *Scholarships for Nurses and Midwives*, which is now with the Australian Health Officials Workforce Committee (AHWOC) for consideration before going to the Health Ministers (Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council - AHMAC). The review *Re-entry Programs for Nurses and Midwives*, is currently in the final stages of completion before being submitted through AHWOC, to AHMAC.



Kindly distribute the N³ET Newsletter to any interested colleagues. If possible, we would appreciate your posting a copy of the N³ET Newsletter on your staff bulletin board. Upcoming Issues: August (No. 3) and November (No. 4).



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To register as a stakeholder, please register on-line at: <http://www.nnnet.gov.au/>