



## Nurse practitioner standards for practice

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Review and consultation report

December 2020

## Overview

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) works in partnership with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) in the regulation of nurses and midwives in Australia.

As a part of its systematic process to review, consult on and develop standards, codes and guidelines for the regulation of nurses and midwives in Australia the NMBA, in May 2019, commenced a review of the *Nurse practitioner standards for practice* (the current standards).

The review process is consistent with the NMBA's commitment to evidence-based structures, systems and processes. The review was informed by a literature review, a review and analysis of the current *Nurse practitioner standards for practice*, a preliminary consultation phase on a revised NP standards for practice (the revised standards) with key stakeholder groups and a public consultation phase.

There was strong support in the submission received for the revised standards, noting the improved presentation and contemporary language recognising the advanced practice role of NPs.

This report describes the process of the review, with a particular focus on the feedback received to the public consultation. The NMBA sincerely thanks all those who contributed to the review process and provided valuable feedback during the development of the revised standards.

## Introduction

The review of the current standards commenced in May 2019. The multi-phased review progressed through a number of steps. The first phase included an exploration of relevant Australian and international literature and regulatory guidelines and an internal review and analysis of the current *Nurse practitioner standards for practice*.

The key findings from this phase identified that:

- The current standards for practice for nurse practitioners in Australia are more advanced than other countries and that the approach taken by the NMBA has posed less regulatory challenges or restrictions to nurse practitioner practice when compared internationally
- the content of the NMBA standards, which are capability based, cover all but one (change management) of 17 common competency domains for nurse practitioners/advanced practice nurses
- that the four-pillar model, represented as the domains of clinical, education, research and leadership in the current standards is still relevant for contemporary practice

Subsequent to the literature and content reviews, the draft revised standards were tested with key stakeholders during the preliminary consultation phase. The feedback received during this phase strongly supported the revised content and structure.

The NMBA approved further amendments to the draft revised standards including aligning the presentation to the *Registered nurse standards for practice* and *Midwife standards for practice*; adding additional terms to the glossary and aligning the 'active' language used in the title of each standard. These changes informed the public consultation version of the revised standards.

This report addresses the strategies used for public consultation, themes of the responses to the online survey and written submissions and the findings.

## Public consultation

The NMBA released the revised standards for public consultation on 13 July 2020 for an eight-week period. A series of strategies were implemented to promote awareness of the public consultation, including a formal public consultation package sent directly to NMBA key stakeholders. All nurses and midwives were sent the NMBA newsletter advising them of the public consultation and how to participate, with a link to the NMBA public consultation webpage and online survey. The option to provide written feedback was also available.

The NMBA webpage had a link to the online survey with the following supporting information available for download:

- a Background Paper, and
- the revised standards.

Feedback to the public consultation could be provided via a detailed written submission or via an online survey.

The following is a summary of the feedback from the written submissions and the online survey.

### 1. Written submissions

In total, 18 detailed written submissions were received by the NMBA. Table 1 outlines the types of individual/organisations who responded in writing to the public consultation.

**Table 1: Written organisation/individual respondents to public consultation**

#	Organisation/individual respondents
1.	University of Melbourne
2.	Northern Territory Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer

#	Organisation/individual respondents
3.	Drug and Alcohol Nurses of Australasia
4.	Alfred Health
5.	Queensland Nurses and Midwives Union
6.	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
7.	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council
8.	Office of the Health Ombudsman
9.	Dr Jane Currie
10.	Australian College of Nurse Practitioners
11.	NSW Ministry of Health
12.	Queensland Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer
13.	Council of Deans of Nursing and Midwifery (Australia and New Zealand)
14.	Tasmanian Office of the Chief Nurse and Midwife
15.	Australian College of Nursing
16.	Department of Health Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer
17.	Ahpra Community Reference Group
18.	Australian Capital Territory Health Department

## 2. Online survey

The online survey invited respondents to comment on key aspects of the revised standards. Qualtrics web-based software was used as the platform for the online survey. There were five questions in the survey.

In total, 47 complete survey responses were received and analysed.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the questions asked and the number of responses to each question.

**Table 2: Question response numbers.**

Question	Response numbers
1. Do you agree that the content and structure of the proposed revised standards is improved from the previous iteration?	47
2. Do you agree with the way that 'Support of systems' has been included in the document? If no, how could it be improved?	47
3. Do you agree with the changes made to the Nurse practitioners standard framework (Figure 1, on page 2 of the Standards for practice document)? If no, how could it be improved?	41
4. Are there any other terms that are used in the document that you feel should be included in the glossary to provide greater clarity?	41
5. Do you have any other comments on the proposed revised standards?	40

## 3. Summary of feedback to consultation questions

There was agreement and support in both the written submissions and online survey responses that the content and structure of the proposed revised standards had improved from the previous iteration. Responders commented positively on the alignment of the revised standards to the individual registered nurse (RN), and midwife standards for practice.

Most respondents supported the inclusion of 'support of system's' in the revised standards citing that it reflected the potential for the NP as an influencer across the broader health system. There were numerous suggestions on how the inclusion of 'support of systems' could be improved. Suggestions ranged from changing the tense of the title to align with the tense and language of the other domains, to a rephrasing of the whole title.

The changes made to the NP standards framework received a mixed response in the online survey. There was strong support in the written submissions on the changes, in particular the use of the term 'independence' and its emphasis throughout the revised standards. There was a call from some respondents to further reinforce the use of 'independence' throughout the revised standards; a minority of respondents did not see the value of 'independence' being added.

Most online survey respondents agreed **no** additional terms needed to be included in the glossary. In the written submissions there was mixed feedback regarding additional terms for the glossary, ranging from suggestions of new terms and suggested amendments to terms already in the glossary.

General comments on the revised standards raised the need for clarity on the attributes of NPs. There was also feedback on the pathway to endorsement as an NP, with some supporting the need for set of pre-determined competencies and skill outcomes for NPs, to support a better understanding of the role.

### Summary of changes

The responses to the public consultation have been analysed to inform changes to the revised standards.

The following is high-level summary of the changes made to the revised standards following public consultation:

- aligning the presentation of the revised standards to the *Registered nurse standards for practice* and the *Midwife standards for practice* specifically:
  - replacing the heading of 'cues' with a lead statement of 'the nurse practitioner' to clearly identify the criteria by which the standard is demonstrated by an NP
  - numbering the practice expectations (previously known as cues)
  - inclusion of lead statements under each standard
- referencing NPs as a cohort rather than the singular 'the nurse practitioner'
- including culturally safe and respectful practice and the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare
- adding a link to the International Council of Nurses' (ICN) *Code of ethics*
- reframing the title of Standard 4 to align with the active language of the other standards
- linking the title of Standard 4 to the advanced practice principle of 'support of systems', and
- adding 'autonomous', 'independence' and 'support of systems' to the glossary

### Conclusion

The NMBA received and carefully considered a wide range of views in developing the revised standards. The NMBA approved the final version *Nurse practitioner standards for practice* at its November 2020 meeting. The outcome is revised standards that are informed by nurse practitioners and other stakeholders, are contemporary, relevant and useful.

The revised standards build on, and expand upon, the practice standards required of a registered nurse. The revised standards set out the expectations of the NPs practice in all contexts and determine an NPs capability for practice.

The revised standards are used to guide consumers, employers and other stakeholders on what to reasonably expect from an NP regardless of their area of practice or their years of experience.

The revised standards should be read in conjunction with the NMBA [Safety and quality guidelines for nurse practitioners](#) and [Registration standard: Recency of practice](#).