

Position Statement

February 2015

Specialist recognition and the nursing profession

Background

In 2010, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) considered the endorsement of a range of nursing specialties in preparation for the transition to the National Scheme¹. The requirement for endorsements was considered in accordance with the objectives and guiding principles of the National Law².

The position of the NMBA at the time was to not endorse nurses other than those the NMBA was required to under the National Law, however, the NMBA made a commitment to explore the need for registration of specialty practice within the nursing profession at a later date.

Project findings

The NMBA has now completed its project Specialist registration for the nursing profession (NMP00013) which explored the need for regulation of specialty areas within nursing.

Findings from the 2014 sponsored project identified that:

- a variety of mechanisms are employed internationally to recognise and regulate speciality practice, including licensure, endorsement, credentialing, validation and certification;
- formally regulating speciality groups for purposes of registration did not reduce risk to the public; and
- there was a lack of significant evidence that regulation of speciality practice improves patient/client outcomes.

The project further identified that specialist organisations representing speciality nursing groups in Australia have developed sound governance processes for speciality practice. This provides an effective means of acknowledging advanced practice, and may be recognised by employers and the health industry at large.

In addition, the NMBA noted the guidelines recently released by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (AHWMC), titled - [*Approval of specialties under section 13 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act, Guidance for National Board submissions to the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council*](#).

The NMBA has therefore concluded that current systems in Australia provide an appropriate level of public protection, whilst ensuring a dynamic, flexible and responsive workforce.

¹ [The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme](#)

² [The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law](#) as in force in each State and Territory