

A National Framework for Decision Making by Nurses and Midwives on Scopes of Practice (National DMF)

In preparation for **National Health Practitioner Registration and Accreditation**, due for implementation from July 2010, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) has been reviewing its Professional Practice Framework to ensure readiness for a national approach to regulation.

Underpinned by regulation, the current scope of professional practice for nurses and midwives in Australia is supported by a framework of standards that includes:

- **the ANMC National Competency Standards for Registered Nurses (2006) Enrolled Nurses (2002) Midwives (2006) and Nurse Practitioners (2005)**
- **Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia and the Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia – launched August 2008**
- **Code of Ethics for Midwives in Australia and the Code of Professional Conduct for Midwives in Australia - launched August 2008.**

A number of additional components have been identified as requiring implementation prior to the introduction of National Health Practitioner Registration and Accreditation.

One of these components, a **National Framework for Decision Making by Nurses and Midwives on Scopes of Practice (National DMF)**, has been developed in consultation with the profession and is now ready for implementation. It forms part of the nursing and midwifery regulatory authority's professional practice framework to ensure safe nursing and midwifery care is provided in the public interest.

To promote and implement the framework the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing has approved funding for the development of educational resources in those states and territories that do not currently have a similar tool, namely the **ACT, NSW and NT**.

The purpose of the National DMF is to assist decision making about nursing and midwifery practice and practice changes. Practice change is dynamic and ongoing with a number of interrelated factors driving change.

These factors include:

- **legislative and technological change**
- **altered community expectations**
- **an increased emphasis on the safety and quality of health care**
- **changes in models of care initiated by organisations or professional groups**
- **changes in other health professions**
- **the emergence of new health care roles**
- **changes in the structure and funding of education**
- **changes in the numbers of available health care workers**
- **an ageing workforce.**

In this challenging environment, the National DMF provides a nationally accepted standard for informed decision making. It has a number of possible applications:

- **Individual nurses and midwives can use it to assist them in decision-making.**
- **Boundaries of individual practice are clearly identified.**
- **It widens professional control of practice and assists in the decision on whether it is appropriate to expand those boundaries when needed.**
- **The provision of a nationally accepted standard for informed decision making will assist NMRAs to meet their obligations in regard to protecting the public.**
- **Service providers and policy makers can use the Framework to support their efforts to optimise the contribution of nurses and midwives in the provision of current and future health care.**

The National DMF is principle based and contained within template tools grounded in professional discretion. Differences in education, experience, individual competence and the context of practise are all considered when using the tools.

The National Principles

Decision-making tools:

- 1.** guide nurses and midwives in making decisions about everyday practice and changes to practice over time to meet the health needs of the community.
- 2.** facilitate planning, negotiation and implementation of practice change for individuals or groups of nurses and midwives to meet the health needs of the community.
- 3.** acknowledge that the promotion and provision of quality health services for individual consumers and for the broader community are the drivers for change in practice.
- 4.** enhance safety and quality when integrated with a comprehensive approach to managing risk.
- 5.** recognise and apply to all domains and contexts of practice.

6. facilitate responsiveness to consumers' needs by health workers through changes to the repertoire of skills of individuals or groups by -
- **evolution of new practice areas / capabilities**
 - **negotiation among health workers and between health workers and employers**
 - **making or accepting delegations.**
7. acknowledge the following determinants of practice and how they may limit or enable practice change:
- **legislated authority or restrictions on professional practice**
 - **professional standards of practice**
 - **evidence for practice**
 - **individual capability (knowledge, skill and competence) for practice**
 - **contextual / organisational support for practice.**
8. that are a part of the professional practice frameworks used by nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities and in the self assessment of practice, state explicitly and transparently the role of the tools in circumstances where a nurse or midwife may be called to account for their practice decisions.
(ANMC, April 2007, p5)

The decision-making tools can be used to provide guidance not only for individual practice decisions by registered and enrolled nurses and midwives, but also for decisions about if, and when, it is appropriate for registered nurses or midwives to delegate aspects of consumer care to others.

You are able to access the national DMF tools via the ANMC website at:

http://www.anmc.org.au/projects/past_projects.php#dmf

The Nursing Practice Decision Summary Guide
The Nursing Practice Decision Flowchart
The Midwifery Practice Decision Summary Guide
The Midwifery Practice Decision Flowchart

or

Request a CD via email from: cashley-coe@anmc.org.au

The national DMF can be used by employers, managers and policy makers to interpret and plan for future needs. As a basis for dialogue with the profession it can be used to stimulate discussion regarding current and emerging issues and raise awareness in relation to scope of practice and decision making contributions by nurses and midwives.

This project's mandate is the widespread and consistent use of the National DMF in the ACT, NSW and NT to ensure quality and safety are central considerations when a nurse or midwife makes a practice decision.

It also provides opportunity for nurses and midwives working in other jurisdictions across Australia to be aware of the approved national framework.

We look forward to working with you during the implementation of the National DMF.

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