



# **Consultation paper on draft accreditation standards for nursing and midwifery**

**Issued by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia  
under the authority of Anne Copeland, Chair**

**27 October 2009**

**If you wish to provide comments on this paper, please lodge a written submission in electronic form, marked 'Attention: Chair, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia' to [natboards@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:natboards@dhs.vic.gov.au) by close of business on 24 November 2009.**

**Please note that your submission will be placed on the Board's website unless you indicate otherwise.**

At the time of issuing this consultation paper the Board is operating under the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008* (the Act). However, the approach to the paper and consultation has been informed by the proposed provisions of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Bill 2009 (the Bill, the proposed national law), which was introduced in the Queensland Parliament on 6 October 2009. Nothing in this paper is intended to pre-empt consideration of the Bill in that parliament. A copy of the Act and a link to the proposed national law are available at [www.ahpra.gov.au](http://www.ahpra.gov.au).

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Attachment A1: ANMC National Accreditation Framework (see separate electronic document)

Attachment A2: ANMC accreditation standards — registered nurse (see separate electronic document)

Attachment A3: ANMC accreditation standards — enrolled nurse (see separate electronic document)

Attachment A4: ANMC accreditation standards — nurse practitioner (see separate electronic document)

Attachment A5: ANMC accreditation standards — midwife (see separate electronic document)

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# 1 Introduction

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In providing this paper for public consultation, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (the Board) wishes to acknowledge that the situation in which it finds itself is unique among the ten new national boards. The Board also wishes to acknowledge the contribution of the Australian Nursing Midwifery Council (ANMC) to the preparedness of the nursing and midwifery profession for the new national arrangements.

The uniqueness of the situation of the nursing and midwifery profession is that, at the time of writing, no national accreditation standards are in use in the profession and there is no external authority to which the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council) has assigned the accreditation functions. This does not mean that there are no standards or accredited programs; the current programs operate at a State and Territory level.

In terms of the transition arrangements under the proposed national law, all accredited training programs in nursing and midwifery will transition automatically to the new scheme on 1 July 2010. However, there are as yet no nationally agreed accreditation standards that can be used from 1 July 2010 to review accredited programs or accredit new ones.

What the Board does have access to, courtesy of work undertaken by the ANMC, is a set of accreditation standards that have been developed following an extensive consultation process within the profession.

Noting that the current Act, the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008* (the Act), is silent on what should happen where the Ministerial Council has not assigned the accreditation function, the Board has decided to take on the final stages of the process of developing the standards from the ANMC. This decision was taken to ensure that there are accreditation standards available for nursing and midwifery from 1 July 2010.

The Board has resolved that these final stages will be based on the ANMC standards. Accordingly these standards, with the express agreement of the ANMC, form the basis of this consultation paper. The ANMC has developed a National Framework for Accreditation and four accreditation standards covering registered nurses, enrolled nurses, midwives and nurse practitioners.

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## 2 The new environment

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The Board is in some sense consulting again on a set of standards that have already been the subject of extensive consultation. However, the Board takes a broad view of its responsibilities under the Act in relation to consultation requirements. In this case, the materials prepared by the ANMC will be placed on the Board's website, and open for comment from a large number of parties, including the general public, consumer organisations, professional associations, governments and other national boards.

The specific provision in the Act reads as follows:

A person or body that develops accreditation standards is to ensure that the process by which standards are developed includes wide-ranging consultation with respect to the content of the standards. (Section 9(4)).

Another difference between the Board's processes and previous processes is that the Board's processes are being undertaken under legislation that requires the Board to have regard to requirements set down by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (the Agency) in relation to the development of standards. In this case, the Agency has not finalised its standards but the Board has had access to the draft standards, the main features of which are set out below.

The specific provision in the Act reads as follows:

The functions of the Agency are as follows –  
(a) to establish general requirements for the development of health profession standards for the purpose of ensuring that the scheme operates in accordance with good regulatory practice (Section 20(1)).

The Board notes that the draft standards provided to the Board by the Agency ask that in developing new or amended accreditation standards, the body developing the standards (in this case, the Board) must be satisfied that the proposal:

- takes into account the objectives and guiding principles in the legislation
- meets the consultation requirements in the legislation
- meets any international standards relating to the profession
- takes into account the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) guiding principles for best practice regulation by considering the following matters:
  - whether the proposal results in an unnecessary restriction of competition among providers and potential providers of education programs
  - whether the proposal results in an unnecessary restriction of consumer choice
  - whether the overall costs of the proposal to members of the public, education providers and/or governments are reasonable in relation to the benefits to be achieved
  - whether the accreditation authority has procedures in place to ensure that the proposed standard remains relevant and effective over time.

The document *Best Practice Regulation — A Guide for Ministerial Council and National Standards Setting Bodies 2007* can be found at:

[www.finance.gov.au/obpr/docs/COAG\\_best\\_practice\\_guide\\_2007.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.au/obpr/docs/COAG_best_practice_guide_2007.pdf)

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## 3 Issues to be considered

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The Board has commenced its consideration of whether the standards that are the subject of this consultation paper fully meet these requirements. However, the Board would like to receive comments on this topic from other parties before finalising its views. The Board is particularly interested in the views of those making submissions on three matters:

- the extent to which the proposed standards are consistent with the COAG guiding principles for best practice regulation
- the extent to which the proposals meet international standards — relevant international standards that respondents may wish to consider include the WHO (2009) *Global Standards for the Initial Education of Professional Nurses and Midwives*, which can be found at:  
[www.who.int/hrh/nursing\\_midwifery/hrh\\_global\\_standards\\_education.pdf](http://www.who.int/hrh/nursing_midwifery/hrh_global_standards_education.pdf)
- the extent to which, where some of the proposals move beyond current requirements in one or more State and Territories, it would be desirable to introduce them more slowly following a transitional period and not immediately on 1 July 2010.

It would assist the Board if submissions addressing this paper provided comment under the following headings:

1. General comments on the package as a whole.
2. National accreditation framework (Attachment A1).
3. Accreditation standards — registered nurse (Attachment A2).
4. Accreditation standards — enrolled nurse (Attachment A3).
5. Accreditation standards — nurse practitioner (Attachment A4).
6. Accreditation standards — midwife (Attachment A5).