

FIFTH MEETING OF THE NURSING AND MIDWIFERY BOARD OF AUSTRALIA 25 FEBRUARY 2010

The fifth meeting of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia was held on 25 February 2010 at the Hilton Melbourne Airport. An extraordinary meeting was also held via teleconference on 16 March 2010. This communiqué reflects the discussions and decisions of the Board at both these meetings.

The Board is committed to working with the nursing and midwifery professions, and other health professions to ensure a smooth transition to the new scheme. During the transition, there are some difficult and complex issues with which the Board is grappling. The Board's approach is to make decisions that provide expedient initial solutions for the transition to the new scheme, and then to undertake further work later to refine these as necessary.

As in previous meetings, in its fifth meeting the Board focused on the matters it had to resolve to enable the scheme to commence on 1 July 2010. The Board gave further consideration to matters of budget in order that the Board's first Health Profession Agreement can be prepared.

The Board welcomed Anne Morrison to the meeting. Anne is taking up the position as Executive Officer to the Board. The Board thanked Marion Clark for her excellent support to the Board and wished her well in New Zealand.

The Board is keen to work with the Australian Peak Nursing and Midwifery bodies and has invited the APNMF to meet with the Board at its March meeting.

Endorsements for scheduled medicines

The Board considered feedback from the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) sub-committee regarding its proposals to Ministerial Council.

The Board had proposed broad standards to enable endorsed registered nurses to prescribe medications. The Board wants to take a leadership role in encouraging change and is committed to do whatever possible in the future to enable properly qualified and endorsed registered nurses to prescribe medications. Such a move would improve both patient access and efficiency in health service delivery. At the current point in time, however, State and Territory based drugs and poisons legislation does not support a contemporary view of nursing practice and sets legal boundaries around use of medications which do not allow registered nurses who are not endorsed nurse practitioners to prescribe.

The Board, therefore, has concurred with the recommendations of the NRAS sub-committee and revised its proposals for endorsement of scheduled medicines for registered nurses to restrict them to nurses practising in rural and isolated areas and also to allow these endorsed nurses to obtain, supply and administer medications only.

The Board made minor revisions to its scheduled medicine endorsement for eligible midwives and is working with the Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA), in the Commonwealth to develop guidelines which will support the proposed amendments to the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (Cth). The Board has developed terms of reference for a working group to assist with this work and will be working with the College of Midwives in identifying members for this group.

The Board considered arrangements under the National Law through which the National Boards for Nursing and Midwifery, Optometry and Podiatry are seeking to grant scheduled medicines endorsements for suitably trained registrants. This included a proposal for a consistent approach to the development, framing and implementation of proposals for scheduled medicines. The Board is working towards the establishment of a Scheduled Medicines Expert Advisory Group to provide expert advice to National Boards on policy development and implementation to support the administration, supply and prescribing of scheduled medicines by registered practitioners.

Proposed codes and guidelines

The Board considered guidelines on advertising and mandatory notifications which are shortly to be distributed for consultation. The Board also decided to consult on its proposed adoption of a range of guidelines and codes of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council. These will be distributed and posted on the website within the next week.

Endorsement of midwife practitioners

The Board further considered this issue and agreed that suitably qualified midwives who are also registered nurses can be endorsed as nurse practitioners and also endorsed as eligible midwives under section 94 of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law 2009* (the National Law). This decision will also apply to current midwives who are nurse practitioners in their areas of practice whose endorsement will be transitioned under the National Law.

The Board agreed that there was the potential to confuse both the public and the profession in relation to endorsed midwife practitioner. The National Law provides for recognition of suitably qualified midwives to be endorsed without needing midwife practitioner endorsements subject to approval by Ministerial Council. Therefore the board will develop a position paper and also prepare a submission for Governments to recommend that the provisions for the endorsement of midwife practitioners are repealed at the first available opportunity for amendment to the legislation.

Programs providing qualifications for registration

The Board considered a list of all the programs that are currently approved by State and Territory nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities and noted that under the transition provisions of the National Law, these programs will all be listed as approved programs after 1 July. The Board formally approved them as providing qualifications for registration under sections 53, 94 and 95 of the National Law. This decision means that all current students in a currently approved program of study will meet the qualification requirements of the National Law when they graduate.

The Board noted that ANMC is currently consulting on accreditation standards for re-entry programs and these will be submitted to the Board for approval in due course.

Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation

The Board considered a proposal from ANMC to Ministerial Council seeking assignment as the accrediting authority for Nursing and Midwifery. The Board supported the proposal that a restructured ANMC commence as the external accreditation entity in 2010. The Board and the Agency will continue to work with ANMC to assist in the transition process.

Approval of accreditation standards

The Board considered very carefully all the feedback it had received on the ANMC accreditation standards and also considered a number of complex factors that had impact on the decision. The Board approved the accreditation standards.

The Board recognised that for many of the Boards policies and standards there will be a period of transition to ensure that no parties are disadvantaged by the changes. All currently approved programs will continue to be approved by the Board under section 283 of the National Law. There will be a two-year lead-time for implementation of the accreditation standards for approved education programs leading to qualifications in nursing or midwifery.

The Board determined that in order to do this, any education program in nursing or midwifery requiring regulatory approval currently being offered, whose approval expires between 1 July 2010 and 1 July 2012, will have its approval rolled over until 1 July 2012, unless major concerns about the program necessitate an earlier intervention.

In approving the standards the Board acknowledges that there will be further information sought by education providers and other stakeholders. On that basis, the Board is preparing a further communiqué on this matter including implementation details.

Other

The Board considered a number of other administrative and financial matters, including proposed budgets and delegation of functions to working groups of the Board and agency staff.

Anne Copeland
Chair, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
17 March 2010