

Media statement

16 November 2012

National Board position on funding the Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria

The role of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (National Board) is to protect the public.

In relation to nurses and midwives with impairment, the National Law requires the National Board to focus on reducing risk to the public from nurses and midwives with impairment.

The National Board has considered its role in the ongoing funding of the profession-specific Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria (NMHPV), an independent support health program for nurses and midwives with impairment in Victoria.

When the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme) came into effect on 1 July 2010, funds were set aside by the Nurses Board of Victoria for the continuation of the NMHPV until 1 July 2013. The NMHPV is managed independently of the National Board.

'While the National Board is concerned about the wellbeing of all nurses and midwives, and recognises the valuable work of the NMHPV, as a regulator, our core focus must be to protect the public,' said National Board Chair, Ms Anne Copeland.

Having reviewed the NMHPV and other existing support services available to nurses and midwives with health concerns, the National Board has decided not to fund the expansion of a primary, preventative or support health program nationally, nor will it support the ongoing funding of the NMHPV.

However, AHPRA is working with the National Boards, including the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, to explore a possible cross-profession approach to external health programs that could complement the National Boards' core statutory role in relation to impairment.

The National Board considered advice from an independent review that identified that nurses and midwives already have access to existing support services such as:

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) provided by large employers, and
- other public and private health services accessible to nurses and midwives for support and treatment of health problems.

In making its decision, the National Board carefully considered:

- the fairness to all enrolled nurses, registered nurses and midwives of the National Board continuing to fund a service only available in Victoria
- funding implications of establishing and implementing a national health program that provides equitable services across both metropolitan and rural locations in all states and territories, and
- stakeholder concerns that a national rollout of a health program (or other primary/preventative/support health care service) for nurses and midwives may duplicate existing services and have implications for an increase in annual nurses' and midwives'

registration fees over time. The National Board is entirely funded through these registration fees.

In order to assist the transition, the National Board will provide one year's additional funding for the NMHPV to 30 June 2014.

'This will allow the NMHPV to explore alternative funding sources and establish appropriate transitional arrangements,' said Ms Copeland. 'This additional year's funding will not require any increase in registration fees.'

The National Board, however, will also continue its focus on improving national consistency in managing notifications about nurses, midwives and students with health impairment when there is a potential risk to patient safety.

It will also continue to work with AHPRA and other National Boards to implement an education campaign about the mandatory reporting requirements of the National Law, to improve practitioner, employer and education provider understanding about mandatory reporting requirements.

Further information about the National Board's position on the management of nurses and midwives with health impairment is available on the [National Board website](#).

For more information

- Keep up to date with regular news and updates on the National Board website www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au
- Visit www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au under *Contact Us* to lodge an online enquiry form
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200