

Fact sheet

Updated May 2023

Registered nurses with a sole qualification in mental health nursing, paediatric nursing or disability nursing

Introduction

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) undertakes functions as set by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law). The NMBA regulates the practice of nursing and midwifery in Australia, and one of its key roles is to protect the public. The NMBA does this by developing registration standards, professional codes, guidelines and standards for practice which together establish the requirements for the professional and safe practice of nurses and midwives in Australia.

This following information is applicable for registered nurses with a sole qualification in mental health, paediatric nursing or disability nursing.

Background

Before the commencement of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme), each state and territory used a different approach for the registration of nurses with a sole qualification in mental health nursing, paediatric nursing or disability nursing. As a result, registrants with a sole qualification in one of these three areas of nursing, transitioned differently into the National Scheme leading to variations in how registrant details were displayed on the [national register](#).

In 2012, the NMBA introduced changes to notations to ensure that registered nurses with similar qualifications and expertise in mental health nursing, paediatric nursing or disability nursing hold the same registration type for consistency but the scope of their foundational education is clearly highlighted.

How are registered nurses with a sole qualification in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing registered?

Registered nurses (RN) who have a sole qualification in mental health, disability or paediatric nursing do not have a qualification that is substantially equivalent to an NMBA-approved qualification leading to registration as a registered nurse.

Depending on their area of practice, RNs with one of these qualifications are registered with a notation stating that they are:

- *'solely qualified in the area of mental health nursing'*, or
- *'solely qualified in the area of paediatric nursing'*, or
- *'solely qualified in the area of disability nursing'*.

Qualifications solely in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing can only be obtained internationally, as there are no longer programs of study approved in Australia for nurses to gain these types of qualifications.

What does the notation mean?

Notations are used by National Boards to describe and explain the scope of a practitioner's practice by noting the limitations on practice. In this situation the NMBA use the notation to indicate limitations of the practitioner's foundational education and therefore on their practice.

Will a notation reflect badly on my professional status?

No, a notation is not an indication of any concern about your performance or ability as an RN. Notations are used to provide relevant information to employers and the public on an individual's registration status, in these circumstances the area in which they are qualified.

I hold a sole qualification but wish to work in a different area of practice – what do I need to do?

If you hold general registration with a sole qualification notation, you will first need to complete an NMBA-approved program of study leading to general registration as a registered nurse before you can expand your scope of practice beyond the area of practice in which you hold the notation. Additionally, you will need to ensure that you have the appropriate education and experience to work in a different area of practice.

The NMBA expects that nurses and midwives recognise and work within their scope of practice which is determined by their foundational education, training, authorisation, competence, qualifications and experience, in accordance with local policy¹.

How can I have the notation removed from my registration?

If you hold general registration with a sole qualification notation, you will first need to complete an NMBA-approved program of study leading to general registration as a registered nurse and apply to the NMBA to have the notation removed. You will then need complete an [Application for removal of notation form APRN-40](#).

Additional information relating relevant to internationally qualified registered nurses (IQRNs) seeking registration with a sole qualification in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing can be found in the following fact sheet:

[Fact sheet: Internationally qualified registered nurses with a sole qualification in mental health, paediatric or disability nursing.](#)

For more information

- Visit www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au under *Contact us* to lodge an online enquiry form
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (in Australia) +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers)

¹ Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia - Code of conduct for nurses 1 March 2018 - 2.2(e)

Document history

Approved by: Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia

Date commenced: January 2017

Next review due: May 2028

Policy history: Is this a new policy? **N**

Does this policy amend or update an existing policy? **Y**

If so which version **v1.2**

Does this policy replace another policy with a different title? **Y**

Nurses with a sole qualification in mental health nursing, paediatric nursing or disability nursing

Approval date	Version	Reason for change
May 2023	v1.3	Additional wording included to provide clarity around expanding scope of practice Inclusion of link Application for removal of notation form APRN-40
November 2021	v1.2	New document template Inclusion of the following additional questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does the notation mean?• Will a notation reflect badly on my professional status? Inclusion of reference to IQRN sole qualification fact sheet
November 2019	v1.1	Updated introduction section for consistency with other NMBA fact sheets Headings changed to Q&A format
January 2017	v1.0	n/a