

## Fact sheet

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January 2017

### Safety and quality guidelines for privately practising midwives

#### Introduction

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) carries out 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.

The [Safety and quality guidelines for privately practising midwives](#) (the guidelines) was published on the NMBA website on 1 February 2016 and comes into effect on 1 January 2017. The existing *Safety and quality framework for privately practising midwives attending homebirths* will end on 31 December 2016.

#### Background

Section 284 of the National Law gives privately practising midwives (PPMs) providing homebirth services an exemption from the NMBA's professional indemnity insurance (PII) requirement set by section 129 of the National Law. The exemption has been extended on two occasions and is currently in place until 31 December 2019.

Section 284(c)(ii) states:

- (c) the midwife complies with any requirements set out in a **code or guideline** approved by the National Board under section 39 about the practise of private midwifery, including –
  - (ii) any requirement in a code or guideline relating to the **safety and quality** of the practise of private midwifery.

The existing *Safety and quality framework for privately practising midwives attending homebirths* was developed in 2011 and established the requirements which PPMs providing homebirth services must meet to be exempt from holding PII for intrapartum care.

The NMBA has developed the guidelines after undertaking an extensive consultation of the existing *Safety and quality framework for privately practising midwives attending homebirths*.

The following questions answer common queries that you may have about transitioning from the *Safety and quality framework for privately practising midwives attending homebirths* to the *Safety and quality guidelines for privately practising midwives*.

#### Who does this apply to?

This fact sheet applies to privately practising midwives including those with an endorsement for scheduled medicines.

## How are the guidelines different from the *Safety and quality framework for privately practising midwives attending homebirths*?

The guidelines replace the existing framework and set out:

- the requirements set by the NMBA relating to the safety and quality of private practice midwifery, in the provision of home birth services for PPMs to be exempt from the professional indemnity insurance (PII) requirements set by the National Law<sup>1</sup>, and
- the legislative and regulatory requirements of applicable registration standards, professional codes and guidelines.

## I am a midwife in private practice, what do I need to do before the new guidelines come into effect?

You need to familiarise yourself with the guidelines before 1 January 2017.

During the transition period (1 February 2016 to 31 December 2016), we encourage you to begin reflecting on your practice using the guidelines and to undertake any activities that will help you address any identified areas of learning.

## What key changes do I need to be aware of?

The key changes to the guidelines are:

- the requirement for a risk assessment based on the Australian College of Midwives (ACM) [National midwifery guidelines for consultation and referral](#)
- the presence at a homebirth of two registered health professionals, educated to provide maternal and newborn care and skilled and current in maternity emergency management and maternal/neonatal resuscitation, one of whom is a midwife
- completion of a professional practice review program (PPRP), and
- demonstration of annual competencies in adult basic life support, neonatal resuscitation and training.

## What does this mean for me?

You may need to update or change your practice to demonstrate that you have met the requirements of the guidelines. The NMBA will develop additional guidance and will work with the profession to provide clarity on how you can meet these requirements.

## Why is there now a requirement for two registered health professionals to be at a homebirth?

The requirement for a second registered health practitioner at a homebirth provides support for the midwife to manage the homebirth and any emergency situations that may arise.

## Why has the requirement for completion of a professional practice review program (PPRP) been added to the guidelines?

Based on the feedback received during the consultation on the guidelines it was considered that the PPRP was best placed in the guidelines.

## What documentation will I need to provide as evidence?

You will need to provide evidence that you have met the requirements of the *Safety and quality guidelines for privately practising midwives*. The guidelines section 'Audit of practice' details the evidence needed to meet the requirements of the guidelines. The guidelines set these out clearly in table format according to the registration status and context of practice for the PPM. For further information, please see the 'Table of evidentiary requirements for PPMs' provided in the guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> Sections 129 and 284 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory

### Will I be audited by the NMBA and when will this occur?

Your compliance with the requirements of the guidelines is expected from the commencement date 1 January 2017, and the NMBA may audit from this date. The NMBA released the guidelines on 1 February 2016 to enable you time to prepare and plan to update your practice to meet the requirements of the guidelines.

### When do the new guidelines take effect?

The *Safety and quality guidelines for privately practising midwives* take effect on 1 January 2017. The *Safety and quality framework for privately practising midwives attending homebirths* will end on 31 December 2016.

### For more information

- [Safety and quality guidelines for privately practising midwives](#)
- [Audit](#) information on the NMBA website
- Visit [www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au](http://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)

### Document control

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