

# Developing a Position Description

## Healthy Practices

*APNA has produced a suite of resources to help general practices employ nurses and optimise their role in the general practice setting. Fulfilling these aims will help build Healthy Practices that deliver positive outcomes for their communities through nursing skills and expertise.*

Recent research suggests that nurses working in general practice are more likely to experience job satisfaction, and increased workplace retention, if their position description accurately reflects their role<sup>1</sup>.

### Background

Professional practice standards may provide a useful framework when developing position descriptions for nurses employed in general practice<sup>2</sup>.

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) has a defined set of practice standards that are mandatory in ensuring the safe practice of registered nurses (RN) and enrolled nurses (EN)<sup>3</sup>. In addition, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) Competency Standards for Nurses in General Practice, developed in 2005<sup>4</sup>, recognise the unique requirements for nurses working in the general practice setting. These Standards are being reviewed currently and will be replaced with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) National Practice Standards for Nurses in General Practice<sup>5</sup> once published.

The review reflects the evolution of nursing in the general practice setting and the significant contribution general practice nursing can make to care delivered and in enhancing health outcomes for patients<sup>6</sup>. The Standards provide a useful framework for the general practice team to better understand the contribution nurses can make to the team, to create clarity around expectations of the nursing role and to provide a basis for nurses to reflect on their practice. The resource can also assist in the development of position descriptions, peer review planning and professional development opportunities<sup>7</sup>.

The Standards were developed to assist general practices to plan and prepare for the recruitment of RNs and ENs to the

general practice setting. The resource should be read in conjunction with relevant legislative requirements and the professional practice standards. Other resources that can help guide the general practice team in employing a nurse include: Teamwork in primary care<sup>8</sup>; Nurse Clinics in Australian General Practice<sup>9</sup>; and Expanding Your Practice<sup>10</sup>.

### Context

General practices vary in structure and focus. It is increasingly common for general practices to comprise multidisciplinary teams that meet the complex healthcare needs of their community<sup>11,12</sup>. In 2020, the number of nurses in general practice in Australia increased to over 82,000. More than 60 per cent of general practices now employ at least one nurse<sup>13</sup>.

Nurses seeking to work in general practice require a unique range of skills and knowledge to support their general practice colleagues in providing the best evidence based care and improving health outcomes in the community. Each nurse brings their own qualifications, specific experience and scope of practice<sup>14</sup>. The contribution general practice nurses can make to the practice setting include covering the role of patient carer, organiser, quality controller, problem solver, educator, and agent of connectivity<sup>15</sup>.

### Planning the recruitment, assessment and selection process

Some planning and preparation prior to employing a nurse will assist practices in determining the candidate with the skills, knowledge and attributes best suited for the role. It is important that the general practice team planning to employ a nurse considers multiple factors, including appropriate supervision of enrolled nurses on staff.

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**Table 1: Examples of planning considerations prior to employing a nurse in general practice**

Planning	Examples
<b>Legislative requirements</b>	Registered with the NMBA as a RN or EN, professional indemnity arrangements, professional development requirements.
<b>General practice team</b>	Practice team discussion and job analysis to meet organisational needs prior to recruitment, position description suiting practice priorities, police check as per state and workplace requirements, induction plan, defined hours and location of work, peer review process, understanding nurse scope of practice, supervision of ENs and knowledge of practice standards, shortlisting selection, interviewing and additional assessment, reference checking.
<b>Physical environment</b>	Organisational branding and environment to attract nurse applicants to work in general practice, space to work, computer and login for the nurse.
<b>Role clarity</b>	Specific position description, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, requirements for supervision of ENs or preceptorship of students, policies and procedures, driver's licence, use of decision making tools, frameworks <sup>18</sup> .
<b>Resources</b>	Professional development support, equipment, vehicle/reimbursement for travel/home visits.
<b>Funding</b>	Support for general practice team and nurses to gain understanding of MBS items <sup>19</sup> , WIP <sup>20</sup> and CDM items supporting nurse contribution to general practice <sup>21</sup> .
<b>Supervisory arrangements</b>	Supervision: Both direct and indirect supervision is provided by RN colleagues to ENs to meet legislative and internal policy requirements. ENs are required to work collaboratively with the general practice team and consult with RN associates in the nursing team to plan effective care within scope of practice, undertake delegated work in keeping with the education, competence, and authorisation to perform tasks. ENs need to communicate effectively with RN colleagues when faced with situations outside scope of practice.

Further information on EN supervision is available in the ANMF National Practice Standards for Nurses in General Practice<sup>16</sup>.

**References:**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.apna.asn.au/profession/apna-workforce-survey/apna-workforce-survey-detail>. 2019

<sup>2,4,7</sup> ANF Competency Standards for Nurses in General Practice (2005), [anmf.org.au/pages/competency-standards](http://anmf.org.au/pages/competency-standards)

<sup>3</sup> NMBA Registration Standards, <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx>

<sup>5,16</sup> ANMF National Standards for Practice for Nurses in General Practice, February 2015

<sup>6,9,11,13</sup> AML Alliance, Nurse Clinics in Australian General Practice (2010), [apna.asn.au/lib/pdf/Resources/AMLResources/20131217-teamwork-in-primary-care.pdf](http://apna.asn.au/lib/pdf/Resources/AMLResources/20131217-teamwork-in-primary-care.pdf)

<sup>8,14</sup> AML Alliance, Teamwork in primary care, a guide to roles responsibilities and accountabilities [available from the APNA website] (2013), [apna.asn.au/scripts/cgiiip.exe/WService=APNA/ccms.r?PagelD=12580](http://apna.asn.au/scripts/cgiiip.exe/WService=APNA/ccms.r?PagelD=12580)

<sup>10</sup> AML Alliance, Expanding Your Practice (2012), [apna.asn.au/lib/pdf/Resources/AMLResources/20120710\\_rsc\\_EYP.pdf](http://apna.asn.au/lib/pdf/Resources/AMLResources/20120710_rsc_EYP.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Wagner EH, Austin BT, Davis C, et al., 'Improving chronic illness care: translating evidence into action', *Health Aff (Millwood)*. 2001;20:64–78.

<sup>15</sup> Phillips, C. et al., 'Enhancing care, improving quality: the six roles of the general practice nurse'. *Medical Journal of Australia*. 2009;191:92–97.

<sup>17</sup> State Government of Victoria, Department of Planning and Community Development, Best practice recruitment and selection. Tool kit. 2009.

<sup>18</sup> NMBA, 'Decision making framework 2013', based on the National framework for the development of decision-making tools for nursing and midwifery practice - September 2007 available at, [www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines.aspx](http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines.aspx)

<sup>19</sup> Australian Government Department of Health, Chronic Disease Management – Provider Information

<sup>20</sup> Australian Government Department of Human Services, Practice Nurse Incentive Program (2012), <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/services/medicare/workforce-incentive-program-wip-practice-stream>

<sup>21</sup> Australian Government Department of Human Services, Practice nurse items, MBS items 10983, 10984, 10986, 10987, 10997 and 16400: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/primary-and-community-health/primary-care/medicare-benefits-schedule-item-numbers/items-for-practice-nurses>

[www.apna.asn.au](http://www.apna.asn.au) [www.healthypractices.apna.asn.au](http://www.healthypractices.apna.asn.au)

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APNA acknowledges and thanks the Australian Primary Health Network for use of this material.

This resource is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.

