



The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Productivity Commission Health Workforce Study.

Overview

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) is a peak national organisation established in 1992 to facilitate a national approach to nursing and midwifery regulation. The ANMC works in close partnership with the state and territory nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities (NMRAs) in evolving nursing and midwifery standards that are flexible, effective and responsive to the health care requirements of the Australian community.

Our core activities are:

- Identifying matters which impact on, or are relevant to statutory nursing and midwifery regulation
- Establishing, reviewing and promoting national standards frameworks for nursing and midwifery practice in Australia
- Undertaking assessments of overseas qualified nurses and midwives consistent with the registration and/or enrolment requirements of the Australian nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities
- Initiating and participating in relevant projects on regulation that aid the future growth and development of the nursing and midwifery professions
- Ensuring nursing and midwifery standards reflect the contemporary needs of the Australian community
- Fostering consultative mechanisms with key stakeholders to assist in the statutory regulation of the nursing and midwifery professions

Regulation of nursing and midwifery in Australia

The regulation of nursing and midwifery within Australia is a state based process in accordance with individual jurisdictional legislation as administered by the NMRAs. Its stated purpose is protection of the public. The current model of regulation is that of self regulation in the sense both of regulation of the professions by the professions and also self assessment by the professional.

The ANMC recognises the tensions which arise from differing legislation for example direct entry midwives, enrolled nurses and medication administration and works in collaboration with the NMRAs to achieve a high level of national consistency in order to alleviate those tensions.

As nursing and midwifery regulation evolves in Australia changes such as the increased involvement of consumers in NMRAs and requirements for life long

learning and provision of evidence of continuing competence for annual renewal of registration are welcomed by the ANMC as measures to aid openness and transparency in terms of regulatory processes and also to assist the ANMC and the NMRAs to develop a contemporary regulatory system which meets the needs of the community.

The role of the ANMC in achieving national consistency of nursing and midwifery regulation

Given that regulation of the professions is state based national consistency is achieved through the development of national standards by the ANMC for application in each jurisdiction. The ANMC, in collaboration with the NMRAs and other nursing and midwifery organisations develops National Competency Standards, which are contemporary, appropriately researched, validated and regularly reviewed. The resulting standards are broad and principles based to ensure applicability in all contexts.

The National Competency Standards are utilised by the NMRAs, nurses, midwives, employers and educators to

- assess the competence of undergraduates as beginning practitioners,
- as part of the annual renewal of registration process
- to assess the competence practice of nurses and midwives from other countries
- and in professional conduct matters and disciplinary matters.

All nurses and midwives regardless of their state of registration must demonstrate competency against the national standards developed by the ANMC before they may register/ enroll and again on an annual basis to renew their registration/enrolment.

The ANMC also develops Codes of Conduct and Ethics, position statements and guidelines for implementation by the NMRAs as part of the professional practice framework for nurses and midwives in Australia.

Professional mobility

The provisions of the *Mutual Recognition Act* (the Act) enhance professional mobility by allowing nurses and midwives to move easily around the country and also by allowing nurses and midwives to practice in other jurisdictions via such means as telenursing.

Administration of the Act at the jurisdictional level is aimed at implementation of timely processes. This is aided by close communication between the NMRAs, provision of information via on-line public registers and through NMRA involvement at the national level through appropriate subcommittees of the ANMC.

How do Australia's regulatory arrangements compare with those in other countries?

Australia's regulatory arrangements compare favorably with those of other countries.

Australia regularly reviews its regulatory processes by participation in annual credentialing and regulatory forums convened by the International Council of Nurses and the International Confederation of Midwives. Indeed, Ms Anne Morrison, current

Chair of the ANMC, is one of only ten individuals worldwide invited to join the recently formed ICN Observatory on Regulation.

The ANMC also provides assistance to the region in regulatory matters through participation in and provision of secretariat support for the Western Pacific/South East Asian region (WP/SEAR) bi-annual meeting of Regulatory Authorities.

The role of professional organisations

The ANMC works closely with professional and industrial nursing and midwifery organisations to establish a professional practice framework for nurses and midwives which supports the professions to provide safe and competent care for the community.

Whilst it is appropriate that the regulatory, professional and industrial organisations collaborate closely it is equally appropriate that the regulatory, professional and industrial organisations are quite separate entities. This enables the professional and industrial organisations to represent the interests of the profession and the regulatory authorities to advocate for protection of the public. This removes any perception of conflict of interest.

Education and training

Suitably for registration as a nurse or midwife in Australia is based upon educational preparation as stipulated in the jurisdictional legislation. Accreditation of courses is the responsibility of the NMRAs. The ANMC is about to commence the third stage of a project to develop a national framework and guidelines for the accreditation of nursing and midwifery courses. Upon completion, this project should assist the achievement of national consistency in the accreditation of courses.

The ANMC is also currently working with the Industry Skills Council on the incorporation of Enrolled Nurse training into National Training Packages in line with recommendations of the National Review of Nursing and Nursing Education. Again, it is envisaged that the outcomes of the review will increase national consistency in enrolled nurse training.

Evolving roles

The ANMC is supportive of the evolution of nursing roles such as the nurse practitioner which, through expanding the scope of nursing practice, make an important contribution to better health outcomes in the community. In 2003 the ANMC, in conjunction with the New Zealand Council of Nursing, commissioned a project to research the development and progress of the role of nurse practitioner and develop competency standards for nurse practitioners in Australia and New Zealand.

Migration issues

The ANMC is the delegated authority for the skills assessment of nurses and midwives seeking to migrate to Australia. Assessment of internationally educated nurses and midwives is based on the same suitability to practice requirements

enacted at the state based level. The ANMC has developed a position statement on ethical recruitment of nurses and midwives which supports the ICN statement and is available on our website www.anmc.org.au.

In conclusion

The ANMC is committed to working with government, NMRAs, professional and industrial organizations to develop and implement a system of regulation which is flexible, effective and responsive to the health care requirements of the Australian community.

Whilst acknowledging that the federated system presents challenges the ANMC does not share the view that the current system poses barriers to workforce recruitment and retention and maintains its responsibility, along with the NMRAs to regulate in the interests of protection of the public.