

FOURTH MEETING OF THE NURSING AND MIDWIFERY BOARD OF AUSTRALIA 17 DECEMBER 2009

The fourth meeting of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia was held on 17 December 2009 at the Hilton Melbourne Airport. The Board is established under the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008*.

The Board noted progress with implementation of the new national scheme and expressed concerns about the delays in passing the enabling legislation in some States. The Board is making good progress against its work plan.

The Board is pleased that it now has its own website. The address is www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au and the Board encourages nurses and midwives to visit the website to familiarise themselves with policies, standards, codes and guidelines as the Board prepares for taking over the regulation of nurses and midwives from 1 July 2010. The website will be an important tool for communicating with the sector.

As in previous meetings, in its fourth meeting the Board continued work to prepare for the scheme's commencement on 1 July 2010. This meeting focused heavily on the proposals for the Ministerial Council. The Board was pleased to receive many submissions on its consultation paper, and thanks stakeholders for their interest and valuable contributions. The submissions are available on the Board's website (except for confidential submissions).

The Board is committed to considering the views of the professions in its regulatory work and carefully considered the submissions before finalising its proposals for Ministerial Council. Proposals were amended to take the feedback into account.

The standard for continuing professional development (CPD) was changed to allow mandatory skills acquisition. This change reflects a strong theme in the submissions.

The amount of practice time in the standard for recency of practice was reduced from six months to three months equivalent full-time practice. Submissions had pointed out the difficulty that the requirement may pose for nurses and midwives returning to the workforce or maintaining practice during breaks from the workforce. The change reflects the Board's intent not to create undue barriers to nurses and midwives.

The Board noted the widespread opposition to the need for endorsement of midwife practitioners from every professional organisation and has withdrawn the registration standard for midwife practitioners on the basis of this opposition. In doing this, the Board noted that current midwife practitioners from New South Wales will transition into the scheme under section 278 of the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009 (Qld)* and this transition will ensure continuity of service provision.

The Board has given a lot of consideration to the proposed endorsement for scheduled medicines for eligible registered nurses and has decided to put forward a generic proposal for prescribing for approval under section 14. In doing so, the Board has taken the approach that it is important to set national qualifications and registration criteria for such endorsements which should apply consistently to every area of practice. The registration standard will provide a flexible framework able to be applied to a wide range of circumstances under which governments may wish registered nurses to prescribe over the next few years. The endorsement process will provide a level of confidence in the safety of endorsed nurses to prescribe, while authorisation of prescribing remains under State and Territory Drugs and Poisons legislation and will be determined by governments. Linkages between government's decisions on authorisation and endorsement by the NMBA have been strengthened in this proposal by the addition of a requirement that in order to be eligible for an endorsement, the nurse must not only meet the qualification requirements but also be employed in a position which requires her or him to prescribe.

The final proposals were sent to the Ministerial Council before Christmas and are available on the Board's website. The Ministerial Council is expected to consider the proposals in early 2010, to enable the Board's standards and other requirements to be available well before commencement day on 1 July 2010.

The Board considered draft guidelines on mandatory notifications, common to all Boards, which explain the requirements under the national law for health practitioners, employers and education providers to make compulsory notifications about health practitioners in certain circumstances. The Board also considered draft guidelines on advertising and provided feedback to the Agency.

The Board expects to release draft guidelines for public consultation on 5 March 2010 and will be considering a range of existing codes and guidelines prior to consulting on the ones it wishes to adopt.

The Board noted that it is required to register students from the beginning of the academic year in 2011. It considered the options for student registration, and agreed that the Board will register students by obtaining details from education providers rather than requiring students to go through a full individual application process. The Board determined that all students will be required to be registered from the commencement of their studies.

The Board gave significant consideration to the correspondence and other communication it has received from nursing and midwifery groups on the accreditation standards. As it is important that all views be carefully considered, the Board deferred any decision relating to the standards until such time as it has had the opportunity to consider all the submissions received.

The Board has also been made aware of the strength of opinion from nursing and midwifery groups about the future role of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) in accreditation. Under the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008* it is the role of the Ministerial Council to appoint external agencies to undertake accreditation functions and the Board has had no input into the Ministerial Council's decision on this matter. The Board is working with the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) to facilitate a successful resolution to the situation.

The Board met with Dr Louise Morauta, wished her well in her retirement and acknowledged her significant contribution to the development and implementation of the national registration and accreditation scheme.

Anne Copeland
Chair, Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
16 January 2010