

# Employing a Nurse in a General Practice

General practice nursing is one of the fastest growing areas of the healthcare sector with approximately 14,000 nurses working in practices across Australia.

Employing a nurse can reduce patient waiting times, improve access to primary care services and relieve workforce pressure on General Practitioners.

The role of nurses may vary between practices, depending on the local population's health needs and the complementary services provided by the multidisciplinary practice team.

## Scope of practice

A nurse's scope of practice covers that in which they are educated, authorised, competent and confident to perform, which is influenced by their:

- registration as either a Registered Nurse (RN) or an Enrolled Nurse (EN)
- endorsement, such as Nurse Practitioner (NP)
- educational background
- previous nursing experience
- clinical specialisation.

## Duties and key responsibilities

A nurse may be a Registered Nurse or an Enrolled Nurse. The duties and key responsibilities of a nurse employed in a general practice can vary and include:

### Clinical care

- Provide proficient, evidence-based chronic disease management.
- Conduct preventative screening.
- Demonstrate organisational values including respect, dignity and cultural safety.
- Plan and manage holistic patient care in consultation with medical staff while acting as a patient advocate.
- Liaise with hospitals, community agencies and allied health to coordinate patient care.
- Share innovative practice and work as an integrated team.

### General practice environment

- Maintain accurate documentation using clinical software including recall/reminder systems, IT and information management.

- Apply knowledge of funding models to deliver optimal care.
- Implement general practice management plans and team care arrangements in consultation with GPs and the multidisciplinary team.
- Demonstrate an understanding of workplace health and safety principles.
- Ensure quality systems are in place and reviewed regularly.
- Manage supplies and clinical resources within budget.
- Ensure clinical governance and safe use of medicines following federal/state legislation.

### Team-based care and integrated practice

- Work as a member of the multidisciplinary team, reflecting the values of the organisation.
- Work as an inclusive member of the primary care team, providing appropriate mentoring and guidance for registrars and medical and nursing students (applicable to Registered Nurses).
- Demonstrate a high level of teamwork, support, engagement and communication with the general practice nursing team.
- Work on quality improvement strategies with the practice team to bring efficiencies to practice systems, procedures and clinical outcomes.

### Professional practice

- Maintain awareness of current legislation to ensure compliance with all statutory and regulatory obligations.
- Ensure care is evidence-based and delivered using clinical guidelines and practice to underpin competency.
- Use health literacy principles to lead patient education, community health and outreach programs as well as health promotion initiatives.
- Practise within the organisation's policy and the nursing standards and codes.
- Undertake continuing professional development.
- Review systems and procedures to ensure efficient and accessible care.
- Utilise practice data to identify areas for quality improvement.
- Provide leadership to nursing team and other staff.
- Provide direct and indirect supervision and mentoring to Enrolled Nurses within the organisation (applicable to Registered Nurses).

## Nursing registration

Nurses must be registered as either a Registered Nurse (RN) or an Enrolled Nurse (EN) with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), which manages the process on behalf of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA).

A Nurse Practitioner (NP) is a Registered Nurse who is further educated and authorised to function autonomously and collaboratively in an advanced and extended clinical role.

General practices should establish workplace processes to ensure their nurses' registrations are current. To view the public register of all nurses who are registered in Australia, visit the [AHPRA website](#).

## Supervising Enrolled Nurses

Enrolled Nurses are qualified to perform a wide range of nursing activities. However, an Enrolled Nurse cannot practise independently and must be supervised by a Registered Nurse. A General Practitioner cannot supervise an Enrolled Nurse.

When an Enrolled Nurse is employed in a general practice, it is important to have a policy in place that outlines clear pathways for professional supervision by a Registered Nurse.

## Enrolled Nurses administering medicines

To administer medicines, Enrolled Nurses must have successfully completed the relevant medication administration education as required by the NMBA.

Enrolled Nurses who cannot administer medicines will have the following notation on their registration: *Does not hold Board-approved qualification in administration of medicines.*

## Professional indemnity insurance

All nurses must be covered by professional indemnity insurance to practise and maintain their registration.

Employers and nurses should discuss whether the practice's insurance covers nurses employed in the practice for professional indemnity.

If they are not covered by their employer's professional indemnity insurance, nurses must arrange their own individual policy.

## Professional standards and codes

To practise in Australia, nurses must adhere to the professional standards and codes of the NMBA.

The NMBA's professional standards and codes define the practice and behaviour of nurses including:

- standards for practice
- codes of conduct
- codes of ethics.

The professional standards and codes are available to view and download on the [NMBA website](#).

## Continuing professional development

Continuing professional development (CPD) is a critical part of a nurse's role and a requirement to maintain registration.

The NMBA's Registration standard: Continuing professional development outlines the minimum CPD requirements for nurses.

General practice teams should take the time to consider how they can support their nurses to meet the ongoing CPD requirements.

## Further information

To find out more about employing a nurse in a general practice, refer to the links below:

- [Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia Professional codes and guidelines](#)
- [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency Online register of practitioners](#)
- [Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Continuing professional development](#)
- [Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association General practice nursing](#)
- [Western Australia Department of Health Nursing - further education](#)
- [Healthy Practices The benefits of having a nurse in your practice](#)
- [Australian College of Nurse Practitioners](#)

*Whilst all care has been taken in preparing this document, this information is a guide only and subject to change without notice.*

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