

Inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Health and Cultural Issues in Courses leading to Registration or Enrolment

Preamble

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) leads a national approach with state and territory nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities (NMRAs) in evolving national standards for regulation of the nursing and midwifery professions that are flexible, effective and responsive to the health care requirements of the Australian population. The standards are developed in relation to the current regulatory and legislative environments that govern healthcare in Australia.

The purpose of regulation is the protection of the public. To this end, the ANMC safeguards the interests of the community by promoting high standards of nursing and midwifery practice through the development and maintenance of competency standards and the development of position statements and guidelines.

ANMC position statements provide the nursing and midwifery professions with a national regulatory perspective which may assist the development of nursing, midwifery and health care policy.

Introduction

The intent of this position statement is to inform providers of nursing and midwifery courses leading to registration or enrolment of the need to include a clearly identified subject, unit or module on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' culture, history and health.

The health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia is well below that of other Australian people.¹ Currently, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live 17 years less than other Australians.² The major causes of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are cardiovascular diseases, injury, respiratory diseases, cancer and endocrine diseases. Although these causes of death are the same for the Australian population as a whole, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a greater death rate from these causes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also have higher rates of mental illness, diabetes, hypertension and a range of communicable diseases. They are more exposed to health

risks such as poor nutrition, poor living conditions, violence and the use of illicit drugs.³

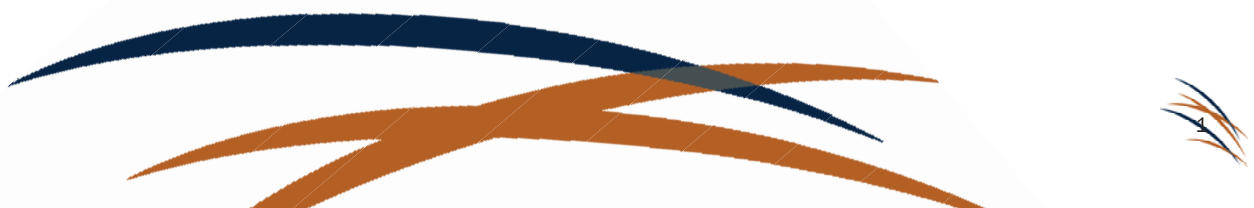
Nurses and midwives have a major role in improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the contribution they make to primary health care and acute care. They may be the first point of contact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the health care providers in many rural and remote areas.

The ANMC National Competency Standards, Codes of Ethics and Codes of Professional Conduct highlight the need for nurses and midwives to be aware of the cultural diversity within Australia. This cultural awareness and sensitivity includes but is not limited to our own Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.^{4,5} Therefore, by inclusion of a discrete subject, unit or module which provides educational preparedness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies the undergraduate and pre enrolment students of nursing and midwifery will be better prepared to contribute competently to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health needs and provide care that is culturally safe and addresses all the dimensions of a cultural respect framework.⁶

Cultural safety is defined as a nurse or midwife's understanding of his or her own personal culture and how these personal cultural values may impact on the provision of care to the person, regardless of race or ethnicity. Cultural safety incorporates cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity and is underpinned by good communication, recognition of the diversity of views nationally and internationally between ethnic groups and the impact of colonisation on indigenous cultures around the world.⁷

There are four levels in the cultural respect framework: Knowledge and Awareness, Skilled Practice and Behaviour, Strong (Customer and Community) Relationships and Equity of Outcomes. The cultural respect framework provides the foundation of attainment of changed knowledge and awareness, leading to changes in practice and behaviour, which in turn provides an assurance that cultural safety and "traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' healing practices are legitimized".⁸

All nurses and midwives in Australia are regulated and accountable to the community for providing quality care through safe, ethical and effective practice, and for maintaining the competence necessary for practice. The ANMC competency standards take into account the



contemporary role of nurses and midwives and the varied contexts of practice in which nursing and midwifery takes place including the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.^{9,10,11,12}

Nursing and midwifery regulatory authorities approve education courses leading to registration or enrolment. Courses are approved on the basis that graduates of the course will be able to demonstrate the ANMC national competency standards. To date, a number of regulatory authorities in Australia have developed accreditation standards and guidelines that require evidence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, culture, and history in nursing and midwifery programs leading to registration or enrolment.

At the last audit conducted by the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses in 2005, twenty two of the thirty five Schools of Nursing offered an independent unit on Indigenous Australian Health in their undergraduate courses.¹³

The ANMC encourages all approved education providers, to promote the role of nursing and midwifery within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities, as the number of nurses and midwives caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is well below that of the other Australian communities.¹⁴

Position

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council recognise that improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia is a national health priority. The nursing and midwifery professions have a key role to play in improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the provision of quality, culturally safe health care.

To this end, the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Council:

- is committed to appropriate education for nurses and midwives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health, culture, and history;
- supports the development and implementation of appropriate curriculum content and assessment strategies to meet required outcomes within nursing and midwifery courses leading to registration and enrolment through partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

- expects that all undergraduate and pre-enrolment nursing and midwifery education courses that lead to registration or enrolment as a nurse or midwife in Australia, will include a discrete subject or unit or module on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples health and culture including the following content:
 - o a broad overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' history, culture, social and economic circumstances needsto underpin the indigenous health curricula; and
 - o issues such as historical, sociocultural and economic determinants of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health, cross cultural communication, primary health care, rural and remote issues, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' Community Controlled Health Services and strategies for delivering effective health services.
- expects that students of nursing and midwifery will have, where possible and appropriate, with the agreement of the elders of the community the opportunity to engage in a clinical placement in an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander health service;
- expects teaching to be supported with the agreement of the elders of the community, by either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples and health care professionals who have developed an understanding of their health, culture, and history; and
- expects that students of nursing and midwifery will be able to demonstrate their understanding of cultural safety issues related to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as evidenced by successful undergraduate and pre-enrolment course completion and subsequent registration and enrolment.

References

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5. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (2003) *Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia*
6. Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council's Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health Working Party (2004): *Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2004-2009*, pp.10-
7. Nursing Council of New Zealand (2005) *Guidelines for Cultural Safety, the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori Health in Nursing Education and Practice*
8. Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council's Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health Working Party, 2004, pp. 10-11.
9. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (2006) *ANMC National Competency Standards for the Registered Nurse, 4th Edition*
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11. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (2006) *ANMC National Competency Standards for the Nurse Practitioner*
12. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (2002) *ANMC National Competency Standards for the Enrolled Nurse*
13. Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Nurses (CATSIN) (2005), Audit 13
14. Ring and Brown, 2002, 629-3111.
15. Nurses Board of Western Australia (2004) *Accreditation Process for Education Providers and Courses Leading to Registration with the Nurses Board of Western Australia*, p. 11, following Nurses Board of Victoria (2003) *Subcommittee for the establishment of standards for the Indigenous Health component of the undergraduate curriculum*. Final Report, p. 5.

Additional Reading

- International Council of Nurses: Fact Sheet: 'The Health of Indigenous Peoples: A Concern for Nursing'
- Royal College of Nursing, Australia. (2003) Position Statement. 'Nursing Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples'
- Australian Nursing Federation and Royal College of Nursing, Australia (2006) Draft Joint Position Statement. 'Indigenous Australian People and Nursing Education'



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