



**NURSING SERVICES**

**Transition to Professional Practice  
Subcommittee Report**

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**Endorsed:**

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**Continuing Education Advisory Committee 23 April 2004**

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## **PROPOSAL**

To seek endorsement from the Continuing Education Advisory Committee for the establishment of a framework for Transition to Professional Practice, and 10 standards to facilitate successful Transition to Professional Practice.

## **BACKGROUND**

The South Australian Nursing & Midwifery Recruitment and Retention Strategic Directions Plan 2002 – 2005 was commissioned by the Hon Lea Stevens, MP, Minister for Health to review workforce issues and the recruitment and retention of nurses and midwives in South Australia.

The Department of Human Services, the Australian Nursing Federation (SA Branch), nurse/midwife leaders, nurses and midwives, industry partners and peak professional nursing and midwifery bodies worked in a collaborative partnership in the development of the strategic directions plan.

Through this collaboration and the review of literature it was identified that the supply and retention of nurses and midwives depends on many factors, including educational opportunity, clinical training, support for new graduates, improved workplace practices, meaningful careers and continuing education.

A set of recommendations was established to address the identified issues.

In relation to continuing education and in particular support for new graduates, The South Australian Nursing & Midwifery Recruitment and Retention Strategic Directions Plan 2002-2005 recommended:

### **Culture towards new graduates (3 Retention [13])**

- That the DHS reviews the graduate nurse and midwives programs, address the issue of the vulnerability of new graduates to physical and horizontal violence in the workplace.

### **Graduate nurse/midwife programs (5 Education [29])**

- That continued funding for graduate transition programs is provided and key performance indicators are developed for reallocating funding based on successful programs.
- That graduate programs be reviewed to ensure that they are:
  - Flexible and customised to the assessed needs of the new graduate
  - Responsive to health unit needs
  - Flexible in terms of mode of delivery
  - Competency based.
- That the DHS ensures that sufficient places are available within graduate programs for all graduates wishing to access them.

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### **Transition to work programs for enrolled nurses (5 Education [27])**

- That the DHS convene a stakeholder group to develop programs to assist enrolled nurses make the transition from educational preparation to practice. These programs should reflect the principles adopted for the registered nurse undergraduate program and include a preceptor component.

### **Preceptoring and mentoring students (5 Education [28])**

- That nurses and/or midwives undertaking preceptorship roles have access to suitable education to equip them to perform this role.

The following set of outcomes were developed to guide the work of the Transition to Professional Practice Subcommittee including:

- A group of key stakeholders is established.
- Transition to professional practice is defined including the groups of nurses and midwives transition is relevant to (including registered nurses, enrolled nurses, direct entry midwives, refresher/re-entry nurses).
- Partnerships between health sector and the education sector are established to ensure collaboration in the principles of transition to professional practice.
- Partnerships between health sector and the education sector are established to ensure collaboration in the provision of adequate placements in the health care sector for transition to professional practice.
- Partnerships between health units are established to ensure consistency in the delivery and development of transition programs.
- Where a national framework of guidelines and standards for transition programs for institutions is developed, the established health unit partnership will promote employing institutions to meet the standards.
- In the interim, principles of transition programs relevant to South Australia are developed in line with the recommendations of the South Australian Nursing and Midwifery Recruitment and Retention Strategic Direction Plan. This will include the review of programs to ensure that they are:
  - Flexible and customised to the assessed needs of the new graduate
  - Responsive to health unit needs
  - Flexible in terms of mode of delivery
  - Competency based.
- Preceptorship/mentorship models are included in the review of principles of transition programs.
- Accreditation for institutions' transition program is reviewed.

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- Recommendations will be made to the Funding Model Subcommittee regarding the establishment of a system to allocate dedicated funds to health and community care institutions, to assist registered and enrolled nurses in making the transition into employment, including the transition into employment of those nurses who have completed a re-entry program.
  - Transition programs are encouraged in areas such as mental health, aged care, community nursing, and rural health as well as hospitals.
  - The recommendations of the Generational Health Review are considered in the establishment of programs to meet the needs of nurses in transition to professional practice.
  - The recommendations of the “Getting Em and Keepin Em” Report are considered in the establishment of programs to meet the needs of nurses in transition to professional practice.

A process of discussion, practice review and literature review was used to inform decision-making.

Key literature included:

- National Review of Nursing Education 2002 Our Duty of Care (Published on [www.detya.gov.au/highered/nursing/pubs/duty\\_of\\_care/](http://www.detya.gov.au/highered/nursing/pubs/duty_of_care/))
- NSW Nurses Registration Board ‘Project to Review and Examine Expectations of Beginning Registered Nurses in the Workforce 1997’ (Published on [www.nursesreg.nsw.gov.au/exp\\_brns.pdf](http://www.nursesreg.nsw.gov.au/exp_brns.pdf))

## **DISCUSSION**

The significance of transition programs and the timeliness of their review was established in the National Review of Nursing Education 2002 Our Duty of Care with the recommendation to ensure consistency and quality in the development and delivery of transition programs (Recommendation 14).

Transition from education to the role of the professional and “between different roles will be an increasing feature of the workplace of the future. ...Consequently, the need for organisations to include transition processes and support will increase. To support these transitions, organisations will need to develop strategies to encompass transition processes as part of normal operations. To achieve this will require some investment in educational infrastructure and teaching expertise in clinical areas” (National Review of Nursing Education, 2002, p142).

Following initial discussion and review of both current practice and literature the key focus identified by the subcommittee was to:

- Focus not on what we currently do, but look forward to the next 20 years, and
- Extend the current focus of transition in the acute care sector to the community.

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In order to address the recommendations identified in the Nursing and Midwifery Recruitment and Retention Strategic Directions Plan it was considered necessary to define the following:

1. Transition to professional practice
2. Groups included in transition to professional practice
3. Principles for transition to professional practice programs

These three definitions became the key priorities of the subcommittee.

In order to define transition to professional practice, an understanding of which practice groups transition to professional practice applies to was required. While there are a broad range of practice groups requiring assistance with transition, there is a more specific group requiring transition to professional practice.

“One important transition is that from education to the role of the professional” (National Review of Nursing Education, 2002, p142). Transition to Professional Practice refers to the process of becoming a professional. It is a period of adjustment where the new graduate is required to bring together their theoretical and professional knowledge. This process of adjustment to workplace practice complements the organisational orientation.

As such transition can be considered in two groups: Transition to Professional Practice, and Transition to Workplace practice.

Transition to Professional Practice applies to newly graduated registered and enrolled nurses, midwives and mental health nurses. Transition to Workplace Practice may apply to Re-fresher and Re-entry registered and enrolled nurses, overseas-qualified nurses, nurses’ transitioning between the aged, community and acute areas.

As the recommendation of the subcommittee was to review transition to professional practice, the definition and principles developed refer to transition to professional practice, however it is considered that transition to workplace practice will include some of the principles developed in varying degrees.

Transition to Professional Practice aims to facilitate a supportive environment to enable new graduates to undertake a process of:

- developing positive attributes and attitudes to work,
- skill consolidation ,
- building clinical confidence and
- defining their professional responsibilities and boundaries.

Both the employer and the employee have a responsibility to enable successful transition to professional practice.

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To assist in a positive and supportive approach to the transition to professional practice 4 principles have been identified. They are:

- Supportive environment
- Orientation to corporate knowledge to support the development of positive attributes and attitudes to work
- Development of clinical confidence
- Preparation for professional responsibilities

A Supportive Environment refers to the employer and staff of the health service providing a supportive culture towards new graduates. One way this can be achieved is through the introduction of a peer support model. Peer support reflects commitment to a positive learning culture throughout the organisation. Peer support can be demonstrated formally and informally.

Orientation to Corporate knowledge to support developing positive attributes and attitudes to work refers to enabling the graduate to adjust to the health care environment, health care team, routines and apply relevant policies and procedures safely.

Development of clinical confidence refers to the development of the graduate as a beginning practitioner to develop their confidence and competence in providing safe nursing/midwifery care.

Preparation for professional responsibilities: refers to the development of the graduate as a professional within that field of practice commensurate to their theoretical and professional knowledge preparation. It is the health unit's responsibility to assist the graduate to develop their professional responsibility.

These overarching principles provide a framework for transition to professional practice. In order to action the principles, 10 standards have been developed to facilitate successful transition to professional practice.

10 Standards to successful Transition to Professional Practice:

1. The health unit provides a comprehensive orientation to the organisation, unit and transition program.
2. The health unit has an endorsed, documented and resourced formal transition program based on an appropriate model of support which includes:
  - A structured program
  - Time allocation for learning
  - Some form of formal peer support
  - Regular opportunities for debriefing
3. Clearly documented learning outcomes are provided to the transitioning graduate.
4. Effective communication links are present between the transitioning program personnel and the clinical support staff that enables a shared understanding of the learning outcomes and consistency in the approach.
5. A learning program is provided to clinical staff required to provide formal peer support.

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6. The health service demonstrates a proactive approach to flexible rostering and patient allocation that enables a safe environment for both the patient and the transitioning graduate. Prior to a transitioning graduate being placed in an autonomous role, their ability to do so is assessed.
  7. The health unit incorporates into their transition and formal peer support learning programs measures that enable an awareness of the cultural needs of graduates from Aboriginal and diverse populations in transition to professional practice.
  8. A policy and procedure is in place to support a constructive approach to performance enhancement/management where the transitioning graduate requires further professional/clinical development.
  9. Graduates in transition are provided with a system of program evaluation that values their input and has a demonstrated link to transition program review and development.
  10. The health unit provides information on the relevant nursing, mental health nursing and midwifery standards, Code of Conduct & Ethics, and assists the transitioning graduate in the application of these standards and codes to practice.

### **Rights and Responsibilities of Transitioning Graduates**

Rights and responsibilities for the transitioning graduate have been established from these standards.

#### **As a transitioning graduate you have the right to:**

- Have the opportunity to provide regular feedback about your clinical experience and the transitioning program.
- Be heard and valued for your comments and feedback within a confidential environment.
- Receive clear and achievable learning outcomes for transition to professional practice.
- Receive prompt and constructive assistance from the health service if difficulties arise in your transition.
- Feel safe to speak up if you do not feel competent to undertake allocated nursing/midwifery care.
- Receive constructive, regular and timely feedback regarding your clinical development.

#### **As a transitioning graduate you have the responsibility to:**

- Be proactive in seeking assistance and advice from the health service if you are having difficulty in your transition.
- Inform the senior nurse/midwife if you do not feel competent to undertake any aspect of allocated nursing/midwifery care.
- Adhere to professional standards and codes of conduct and ethics.
- Be proactive in identifying your specific learning needs and seek support to achieve them.

Further, the inclusion of this framework within the existing service agreements between those health units providing transition to professional practice programs and the Department of Human Services would provide a means to ensure consistency and quality in the delivery of transition programs.

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

The framework for Transition to Professional Practice is endorsed.

The 10 standards to successful Transition to Professional Practice are endorsed.

The Transition to Professional Practice nurse/midwife rights and responsibilities are endorsed.

The framework, standards and rights and responsibilities are marketed through the development and distribution of a four-page pamphlet (See Appendix 1). Where health units have existing documentation relating to transition to professional practice programs, the DHS will request that the framework, standards, rights and responsibilities are incorporated.

The inclusion within existing Service Agreement between the health unit and the DHS to ensure that these principles are being met is further investigated.

## TRANSITION TO PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

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This document sets out the framework for best practice in the transition of registered and enrolled nurses, mental health nurses and midwives to professional practice. Transitioning nurses and midwives will be referred to in this document as graduates.

### **Introduction**

Transition from education to the role of the professional and “between different roles will be an increasing feature of the workplace of the future. ...Consequently, the need for organisations to include transition processes and support will increase. To support these transitions, organisations will need to develop strategies to encompass transition processes as part of normal operations. To achieve this will require some investment in educational infrastructure and teaching expertise in clinical areas” (National Review of Nursing Education, 2002, p142).

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Transition to Professional Practice applies to newly graduated registered and enrolled nurses, midwives and mental health nurses. Transition to Workplace Practice may apply to Re-fresher and Re-entry registered and enrolled nurses, overseas-qualified nurses, nurses’ transitioning between the aged, community and acute care areas.

### **Principles**

The following principles apply to Transition to Professional Practice.

Transition to Professional Practice aims to facilitate a supportive environment to enable new graduates to undertake a process of:

- developing positive attributes and attitudes to work,
- skill consolidation ,
- building clinical confidence and
- defining their professional responsibilities and boundaries.

Both the employer and the employee have a responsibility to enable successful transition to professional practice.

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To assist in a positive and supportive approach to the transition to professional practice 4 principles have been identified these are:

- Supportive environment
- Orientation to corporate knowledge to support development of positive attributes and attitudes to work
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A Supportive Environment refers to the employer and staff of the health service providing a supportive culture towards new graduates. One way this can be achieved is through the introduction of a peer support model. Peer support reflects commitment to a positive learning culture throughout the organisation. Peer support can be demonstrated formally and informally.

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Development of clinical confidence refers to the development of the graduate as a beginning practitioner to develop their confidence and competence in providing safe nursing/midwifery care.

Preparation for professional responsibilities: It is the health unit's responsibility to assist the graduate to develop their professional responsibility.

Transition to workplace practice will include some of the above principles in varying degrees.

### **Implementation**

This framework can be achieved through the implementation of a set of minimum standards, developed as 10 Standards to a successful transition to professional practice.

These standards have been developed for use within a range of clinical settings including acute care, midwifery, mental health, community, rural and remote. It is therefore recognised that the methods of implementation of these standards will vary according to the characteristics and resources of the health service providing the transition program.

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**The 10 standards to successful transition to professional practice are:**

1. The health unit provides a comprehensive orientation to the organisation, unit and transition program.
  2. The health unit has an endorsed, documented and resourced formal transition program based on an appropriate model of support which includes:
    - A structured program
    - Time allocation for learning
    - Some form of formal peer support
    - Regular opportunities for debriefing
  3. Clearly documented learning outcomes are provided to the transitioning graduate.
  4. Effective communication links are present between the transitioning program personnel and the clinical support staff that enables a shared understanding of the learning outcomes and consistency in the approach.
  5. A learning program is provided to clinical staff required to provide formal peer support.
  6. The health service demonstrates a proactive approach to flexible rostering and patient allocation that enables a safe environment for both the patient and the transitioning graduate. Prior to a transitioning graduate being placed in an autonomous role, their ability to do so is assessed.
  7. The health unit incorporates into their transition and formal peer support learning programs measures that facilitate an awareness of the cultural needs of employees from Aboriginal and diverse populations in transition to professional practice.
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  - Adhere to professional standards and codes of conduct and ethics.
  - Be proactive in identifying your specific learning needs and seek to support to achieve them.
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