



Position statement

Development of the regulated and unregulated workforce: Creating a consistent national learning framework

The purpose of this paper is to propose a nationally consistent approach to development of a nursing support structure that is sustainable and delivers safe and effective care to our communities.

This paper, developed collaboratively between the executive groups of the Nurse Executives of New Zealand (NENZ) and Nurse Education in the Tertiary Sector (NETS), proposes a nationally consistent approach to developing a nursing support structure that is sustainable and resilient, that builds on known and trusted relationships and creates a seamless system which delivers safe and effective care to our communities. It is one strategy, that taken together with the recruitment and retention initiatives and the development of advanced and expanded practice roles for registered nurses that will strengthen the nursing workforce to deliver quality care.

Concern for Patient and Community Safety

Projections of health workforce supply and demand suggests that unless there is an urgent reshaping of the health team structure and articulation of a resilient model of care, there will be people in our communities who will be unable to access the skilled care and service they need to remain well and independent. Work needs to be done with sector groups to bring together synergistic initiatives that deliver a learning framework (linked from NZQA Level 3 to Level 8) to promote a model of team-based care that makes best use of the available workforce to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. Our commitment is to ensure that whatever team structure is in place ensures safe, accessible, acceptable and appropriate care.

Nursing exists on the premise that a regulated workforce provides protection for society by ensuring that nurses have the appropriate preparation, knowledge and skills for the work to be done; and that where practice is not delivered appropriately, nurses will be called to account. The various roles under the umbrella title of nurse (in the Health Professional Competency Assurance Act (HPCA) all have approved scopes of practice, appropriate educational preparation and practice to agreed standards that include direction and delegation to ensure a consistent delivery of care. The nursing roles are all prepared with transferable skills to be flexible to meet changing health service needs. The scopes of practice are appropriate to facilitate nurse leaders to utilise the expertise in various team structures.

The registered nurses ability to provide direction and delegation is essential as increasing numbers of non-regulated workers are employed into various sectors.

The risk can be reduced by aligning nursing team structures and educational preparation, linking healthcare assistants, enrolled nurses and registered nurses in a constructive working relationship.

It is proposed that the reinforcement of a seamless system of education, a clear and strong



team structure and a clear model of care will provide a nationally consistent framework that is known, trusted and cost effective. This will stabilise a key essential component of the health workforce, with minimal disruption.

Model of Care that simply delivers the Outcome

The proposed model of care starts with acknowledgement of the health needs of our community now and into the future; consideration of the workforce / team structure that is needed to support the care delivery pathway; identification of the regulated and unregulated roles needed, how these might be developed and how they will interrelate. The aims are to reduce duplication, reduce consumer confusion and make best use of available resource.

The health team configuration is already complex and to introduce more roles or make core roles generic could result in poor recruitment, role confusion and community disorientation. It is proposed that there should be a simplification of the health team with retention of existing roles, clarification of roles and responsibilities of the team and promotion of a team structure which wraps around the care pathway to achieve clearly agreed outcomes.

For Nursing, this means that all teams are led by a registered nurse who works with either or both an enrolled nurse and / or health care assistant in their support structure.

- The Registered Nurse would undertake a case manager and / or advanced & expanded roles, using skilled assessment, effective care planning and evaluation, undertaking complex care activities, monitoring service delivery and referring for specialist assessment, planning and treatment.
- The enrolled nurse is a regulated nurse role, supports the registered nurse. The enrolled nurse would provide nursing care (personal care/ADLs, take vital signs, recognise clinical deviations, medicine administration).
- The nursing team is supported by the Health Care Assistant (environmental and support role).

This nurse-led team would work across the continuum of health need: acute care, managing chronic conditions, across populations of different ages and stages. The Registered Nurse, in a leadership role, would integrate with other health team members to ensure that the plan of care was achieved. This model ensures that the needs of the individual/community are coordinated, that unqualified workers receive support and guidance to undertake their work, that the finite registered nurse resource is utilised to best effect and that the care delivered is safe and appropriate. It is acknowledged that work will need to be done across the sector to support this team structure and refocus roles.

Consistent National Learning Framework to deliver workforce

It is proposed that work is continued that prepare health care assistants (HCA) to enable them to work in a variety of health environments and which also facilitates those who are interested in undertaking the enrolled nurse and or registered nurse programme

Way forward

New Zealand is a small health system, which is vulnerable to international trends and workforce shortages. As nursing is a core part of the health team, it is important to find a solution that ensures that nursing and its support roles are integrated, resilient and sustainable.