



Australian College of Nursing

**ACN SUBMISSION TO THE NURSING AND
MIDWIFERY BOARD OF AUSTRALIA PROPOSED
DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK FOR NURSES
AND MIDWIVES PUBLIC CONSULTATION PAPER**

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General comment

The Australian College of Nursing (ACN) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) regarding the Proposed Decision-making framework for nurses and midwives (DMF).

ACN has distributed the DMF to our members and sought their feedback. The overall response has been in strong support of the DMF, with most respondents commenting that it is an improvement on the previous national framework. ACN also agrees with the position of NMBA, that it is important to ensure that this important framework is updated and reflective of contemporary nursing practice. Thus, ACN supports the preferred option, Option two: to adopt the proposed DMF.

ACN and our membership have identified some aspects of the DMF which could be further developed or improved. Aside from this, the DMF is a concise framework that clearly articulates the process of decision-making and delegation.



Is the proposed DMF more helpful, clear and usable in practice when compared to the national framework?

The proposed DMF is more accessible and user-friendly than the national framework. ACN members have noted that it is more concise, decreases duplication and that the formatting enables straightforward referencing of specific information.

Does the proposed DMF adequately include the person/woman receiving care in the decision-making?

For the most part, the DMF is inclusive of the person receiving care with regard to decision-making. To provide additional reinforcement of this, it may be beneficial to further include the person as a stakeholder within the 'Guide to nursing practice decisions', particularly within statements 2, 4 and 5.

Consideration could also be given to referencing the person's right to refuse a decision, thus ensuring that the person is completely included in the decision-making process. Additionally, it could be valuable to incorporate supported decision making into the DMF, to facilitate inclusivity of all and avoid overlooking the needs of people with disabilities.¹

Does the 'Guide to delegation decisions' within the proposed DMF clearly identify the delegation roles and responsibilities of the registered nurse and midwife?

Yes, the delegation roles and responsibilities of the registered nurse are generally clearly identified within the DMF. For additional clarity, it may be of benefit to provide a detailed comparison of the concepts of delegation versus assignment or allocation. The DMF does identify that they are different activities, however further explanation would dispel any confusion.

Does the 'Guide to delegation decisions' within the proposed DMF clearly define the relationship and responsibilities of the enrolled nurse?

ACN is also of the view that the relationship between the registered and enrolled nurse could be better represented in the DMF; many ACN members have expressed that the relationship and responsibilities of the enrolled nurse are not clearly and adequately defined. Indeed, the 'guide to delegation decisions' discusses delegation from the registered nurse's perspective, with minimal reference to the enrolled nurse's function in accepting the delegation.

There is also a lack of detail around the enrolled nurse's capacity to dispute a delegation, such as in a situation where they felt they lacked the experience to safely perform a task. This also pertains to similar scenarios involving a registered nurse delegating to another registered nurse with less training or experience.

¹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/handbook-for-parliamentarians-on-the-convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/chapter-six-from-provisions-to-practice-implementing-the-convention-5.html>



ACN members have noted that within the general nursing community, there appears to be persistent confusion about the enrolled nurse scope of practice and how it relates to the registered nurse scope of practice. Ensuring that the delegation and supervisory relationship between the registered and enrolled nurse is very clearly defined would assist with minimising this uncertainty.

Does the ‘Guide to nursing practice decisions’ within the proposed DMF provide clear direction when making decisions about nursing practice?

Generally, yes. However, statement 4, which addresses expansion to scope of practice, could better define contemporary scope of practice; particularly as this is something that is constantly evolving. The statement includes “nurses planning to integrate activities that are not currently part of... accepted contemporary scope of nursing practice”, and then goes on to stipulate that nurses must ensure that the “activity is within the current contemporary scope of practice”. This carries the potential for confusion and may not be adequate to allow for the continual changes that inevitably occur in contemporary scope of practice.

Is the proposed Decision-making framework: summary for nurses more helpful, clear and usable in practice compared to the current nursing practice summary guide?

Yes, the proposed summary is helpful, clear and usable in practice, in comparison to the current summary guide. One ACN member noted that the colour schemes used in the summaries can create legibility issues when the document is photocopied for education sessions. This could be mitigated by a slight redesign, or perhaps the development of a black and white version for photocopying.

Are the essential components from the national framework practice decision flowcharts captured in the proposed DMF summaries?

Yes, the essential information is captured within the summaries.

Please share any other comments you have on the proposed DMF and DMF summaries.

As the DMF is such an important foundation document to guide the practice of nurses and midwives in Australia, it is imperative that it is widely disseminated and promoted. There should be a particular focus on targeting undergraduate, newly qualified and newly arrived international nurses to ensure that they are fully cognisant of the DMF and its influence on their practice.

ACN supports the review and ongoing updating of the DMF. Nursing practice in Australia is fluid, and it is important that the professional frameworks, codes and guidelines that guide this practice are relevant, contemporary and well-considered.

