

Recognition of the need for this resource

Practice nurses have an important role in primary health care. For many years the United Kingdom and New Zealand have acknowledged the significant role nurses play in supporting general practice in improving the health outcomes of patients. In recent years Australia has also embraced the value of the extended role of nurses in primary health care.

Through the introduction of health initiatives in 2001, the 'Strengthening Medicare' package, and the recent commitments to a national primary health care strategy and prevention agenda, the Australian Government has provided an opportunity for general practices to develop a primary health care team that will support general practice and their patients. Included in these initiatives is the provision for increasing the number of nurses working in general practice.

The Government has, as part of these initiatives, recognised that the recruitment and orientation of nurses to general practice is an important aspect of the transition of nursing to the primary health care sector.

In recognition of the need for support in the recruitment and orientation of general practice nurses, the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) has provided funding to develop this national resource. In its development, recognition is given to the previous work of a number of divisions of general practice in producing local resources for recruitment and orientation. These resources demonstrate the commitment of divisions to supporting nursing in general practice.

General practice networks across Australia who have generously provided information and resources developed at a local level are listed on the "Acknowledgements" page of this guide. The guide draws from those contributions, in particular, the considerable early work of GP Access (formerly the Hunter Urban Division of General Practice), and later the Melbourne, Riverina and Illawarra divisions of general practice resource kits.

Development of the Nursing in General Practice Recruitment and Orientation Resource

Project partners in the development of this national resource are the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN), the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF), and the Australian Practice Nurses Association (APNA).

A Steering Committee guided the project and was comprised of the project partners and representatives from: Royal College of Nursing, Australia (RCNA), Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC); Melbourne Division of General Practice; Illawarra Division of General Practice; South Australian Divisions Incorporated; Australian Association of Practice Managers (AAPM); Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA).

Validation of the resource content also included a consultation process involving practice nurses, general practitioners, practice managers, and General Practice Network staff via focus groups, interviews and a web-based survey.

Audience for the national resource

The resource has been developed to assist general practices in the recruitment and orientation of a nurse to general practice.

The target audiences for the resource are:

- general practitioners
- practice managers
- nurses
- the general practice team
- general practice networks.

The resource provides general practitioners and practice managers with an overview of the possible roles nurses can perform in the general practice setting. It also addresses questions most commonly asked by general practices regarding the recruitment and orientation process and nurse utilisation. Professional issues such as registration of nurses, competency standards for nurses in general practice, and professional indemnity considerations are covered.

The resource has also been designed to support nurses in the transition to working in general practice from other clinical areas. It includes information about general practice, the roles and support available to nurses who move to the primary health sector, and professional development issues.

How to use this guide

This resource addresses recruitment and orientation of practice nurses for a number of relevant audiences: the employer, the nurse, the general practice team and general practice networks.

Information is presented in sections to the different audiences, with some common information repeated in each section.

It is designed to provide a national resource including generic downloadable templates in Word, for customising to individual practice requirements.

It is designed to be complemented at the general practice network and local level with relevant information including local program information, professional development activities, resources, and service/referral directories, etc.

Web links have been included to enable access to further information. The links have been selected on the basis that sites contain the most appropriate and relevant information, as well as being the most likely to be updated on a regular basis.