



# Consultation on the proposed model General Practice Accreditation Scheme – APNA submission

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24 July 2015

The Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care consultation on the proposed model General Practice Accreditation Scheme. We are providing this submission on behalf of our membership, Australian primary health care nurses.

## APNA Submission

APNA believes it is important to recognise that primary health care nurses, as part of multidisciplinary teams, are fundamental drivers of quality and safety in the general practice setting. Nurses are also pivotal to practices successfully navigating the accreditation process.

Given the importance of nurses in general practice to the accreditation process, we believe it is critical APNA is represented on the Coordinating Committee providing oversight of the coordination of general practice accreditation. Nurses are a key member of primary health care teams and as the peak professional body for this workforce, APNA has the skills and knowledge to provide a significant contribution to the work of this Committee.

With our extensive experience in this area, APNA is also able to work with the Coordinating Committee and the Commission to develop education activities specific to the needs of nurses, particularly the nurse role in clinical governance for infection control, quality and safety.

Although there is reference to concerns and complaints in the consultation paper, APNA believes further clarity should be provided on the applicable processes if a practice fails to meet the accreditation standards. Primary health care nurses have a strong focus on safety and quality of care and they are most directly exposed to any working practices that may raise safety and quality concerns. It is important that all members of the healthcare team are aware of the implications of a failure to meet the requisite standards, and that remedial action, if required, is adequately monitored and enforced.

Our specific comments on the questions raised in the consultation paper are listed below:

- **Do you think the proposed General Practice Accreditation Scheme will improve accreditation processes for general practices?**

APNA believes that while the proposed Scheme may improve processes for general practices, consideration should be given to how the governance of this accreditation set will operate in an environment where there are other accreditation schemes that apply to other members of the primary health care team (such as physiotherapists, optometrists, dentist and podiatrists).

- **What should not change?**

Although not specifically referred to in the consultation paper, APNA believes that the current accreditation cycle of once every three years should either remain or possibly be extended to once every four years. APNA would not support any increase beyond four years, or a move to reduce the cycle to a period of less than three years.

APNA would support amending the accreditation process to require one activity to be completed each year, thereby ensuring continuous quality assessment and improvement activities are spread across the full accreditation cycle.

- **What are the issues or benefits you see for general practices if accrediting agencies are required to be approved?**

APNA considers that the proposed approval process will be of benefit to general practices and will enhance quality and provide consistency between approved service providers. APNA supports the potential opening up of the market to accrediting agencies, and the increased level of choice this will provide to general practices.

- **What are the issues or benefits you see for general practices if accreditation outcomes data is collected and reported?**

One benefit of collecting and reporting on accreditation outcomes data is that it would help to identify stumbling blocks and those areas that may need wider sector education/development. For example, it could assist in highlighting specific areas where practices fail, and then look at why this occurs and what the possible solutions are.

One issue which we feel should be considered is whether there would be any costs to general practices in providing this data, and if so the extent of any costs.

APNA believes it is imperative that the data collected includes detail on the number of nurses employed at each practice. It would also be helpful to capture data about the precise role undertaken by each nurse in the accreditation process and ongoing maintenance of the standards. Each dataset should also include the name of the accrediting agency.

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## About APNA

Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA) is the peak professional body for nurses working in primary health care. APNA champions the role of primary health care nurses; to advance professional

recognition, ensure workforce sustainability, nurture leadership in health, and optimise the role of nurses in patient-centred care.

APNA is bold, vibrant and future-focused. We reflect the views of our membership and the broader profession by bringing together nurses from across Australia to represent, advocate, promote and celebrate the achievements of nurses in primary health care.

Nurses in primary health care contribute to a healthy Australia through innovative, informed and dynamic care.

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