



## **GP Links Wide Bay Policy General Practice Nurses and Independent Nurse Practitioners**

### **Background**

GP Links Wide Bay is establishing a position statement on Nurses in General Practice and Primary Care. An interpretation is required regarding the following nurse classifications:

- General Practice Nurse
- Independent Nurse Practitioner

The position statement is the policy statement of the Board, GP Links Wide Bay. The position statement provides the context for setting the operational values and direction.

### **Definitions:**

#### **General Practice Nurses**

are defined as a Registered Nurses employed to work within a General Practice setting as a member of a general practice team under the supervision and guidance of a General Practitioner.

This definition includes Registered Nurses with extended clinical skills, who have a Masters Degree (QNC Nurse Practitioner) and are employed to work at an advanced level as a member of the General Practice team under the supervision and guidance of a designated General Practitioner.

#### **Independent Nurse Practitioners**

are registered nurses with a Masters Degree (QNC Nurse Practitioner) who function autonomously and independently in an advanced and extended primary care clinical role in the community without supervision.

## **Statement of Policy Intent**

1. General Practice Nurses (GPN) provide a valuable contribution to General Practice. The role is complementary to the General Practitioner and is integral in adding value to primary health care services.
2. The role of the GPN will vary according to the specific needs and structure of the practice, and the qualifications and specific skills of the GPN.

3. Clear and agreed practice protocols, particularly those related to clinical care form the basis for the role of the GPN within the practice, especially where the GPN is performing at an advanced level. These protocols may include clinical care, clinical organization, practice administration (including practice systems and risk management processes) and integration with other health providers.
4. General Practice Nurses do not substitute for General Practitioners.
5. The role of a nurse in the primary care setting does NOT include:
  - Formulating medical diagnoses
  - Referring patients to specialists
  - Independent ordering of pathology or radiology
  - Prescribing medication and issuing repeat prescriptions
  - Deciding on the admission of patients to hospital.
6. GP Links Wide Bay outright rejects the role of independent nurse practitioners in Primary Care and is opposed to any Commonwealth funding of such.
7. GP Links Wide Bay supports increasing the capacity of General Practice to employ general practice nurses in their current and extended roles with funding through Medicare and /or the PIP.
8. General Practice are private business in their own right therefore GP Links Wide Bay respects the autonomy of General Practices to employ nurses in whichever role the individual practice sees fitting as part of their practice.
9. GP Links Wide Bay supports the role of nurse with extended clinical skills in the context of the primary health care in genuine remote areas, where a General Practitioner cannot be secured. This cannot be seen as substitution for General Practitioner services.
10. GP Links Wide Bay supports increasing the numbers of nurses in training and further developing a General Practice Nursing curriculum including advanced roles within a General Practice setting

Therefore GP Links Wide Bay

- Reaffirms the role of the General Practitioner as the key provider of primary health care to the Australian community.
- Opposes the concept of independent nurse practitioners in Primary Care
- Opposes the use of nurse practitioner services as substitute for General Practitioner services
- Supports the development of consistent collaborative models of practice for registered nurses with a Masters Degree (QNC Nurse

Practitioner) working at an advanced practice level within a designated General Practice, based on documented clinical governance and structured protocols between the general practitioner and the general practice nurse.

April 2009