

NURSE PRACTITIONERS
— TRANSFORMING HEALTH CARE —

NURSE PRACTITIONERS



**PRIMARY
HEALTH CARE**

An Initiative of the Australian College of Nurse Practitioners





WHAT IS A NURSE PRACTITIONER?

A Nurse Practitioner (NP) is a Registered Nurse with the experience and expertise to diagnose and treat people of all ages with a variety of acute or chronic health conditions. NPs have completed additional university study at Master's degree level and are the most senior clinical nurses in our health care system. The title "Nurse Practitioner" can only be used by a person who has been endorsed by AHPRA through the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.

National standards for practice ensure that Nurse Practitioners are capable of providing high quality, patient centred care. They are also capable in clinical research, education and leadership as applied to clinical care and health service development.

WHY ENGAGE A NURSE PRACTITIONER?

Nurse Practitioners can add significant value to any team delivering health care services.

Nurse Practitioners:

- Have practised in Australia since the year 2000
- Provide health care in all states and territories in Australia
- Can provide services eligible for patient rebates through Medicare
- Provide prescriptions and access to some PBS medicines
- Can refer patients to hospitals and specialists
- Can order x-rays and diagnostic tests
- Are registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)

Nurse Practitioners work as key members of the healthcare team and collaborate with other nurses and healthcare professionals including GPs, medical and surgical specialists, physiotherapists, dieticians, occupational therapists, social workers, and many others. They work in a variety of locations, both in hospital and community settings.

Nurse Practitioners:

- Are nursing leaders providing holistic health care to patients
- Have speciality skills and training
- Are collaborative health practitioners
- Are experienced team coordinators
- Focus on health promotion, education, and preventative care
- Mentor junior health care professionals

RECRUITING A NURSE PRACTITIONER

Nurse Practitioners are in high demand, therefore it can be challenging to recruit one.

Important considerations when recruiting a Nurse Practitioner:

1. Ensure the salary package matches their specialist training.
2. Allow a Nurse Practitioner to work to their full scope of practice.
3. The Nurse Practitioner should be a part of your team.
4. Like all health professionals, a Nurse Practitioner requires ongoing professional development and mentorship.
5. Consider existing nursing staff, can you support their development towards a NP role? Recruiting a NP will allow for mentorship of your current nursing staff, or engage with the ACNP and its members to assist with 'growing your own'.

You may also wish to consider contracting a Nurse Practitioner, in a similar way to how you might contract other health professionals. The same considerations apply.



Wendy Kroon - Primary Care / Aged Care NP

“In recent times, I have broadened my scope to work in primary care. This service provides care to people when at times there are limited options, this could be financial, timing, or simply unable to get a GP appointment.”

FUNDING MODELS FOR NURSE PRACTITIONERS

A variety of funding models exist to support Nurse Practitioner (NP) practice in Australia.

Funding Options

1. Bulk Billing.
2. Private or Mixed Billing.
3. Grant funding sources - can support specialty or community services such as wound management, hospital avoidance health services, care of the homeless or disadvantaged groups.
4. Company or health service funding used to meet the need of a population or group of patients, such as FIFO groups, Aged Care facilities, immunisation programs, employment health risk groups.



Chris Wallis - Primary Care NP/
Nurse Navigator

"At our prisons and corrective centres, the medical care is run much like a traditional primary healthcare centre."

"I also help the medical team on site and rotate through the weekend shift of primary care to ensure prisoners get the care they need."

TERMS TO CONSIDER WITH NP FUNDING MODELS



Value Add

How can the NP scope of practice improve the health care delivery of a service or practice? There are benefits to patients, and to the other practitioners you employ or engage.

Specialty Practice

While many NPs are generalists, the specialty scope of practice of some NPs can enhance services, or fill gaps in services currently offered. NP specialties include, but are not limited to: Diabetes, Wound Management, Chronic Disease, Mental Health, Sexual Health, Women's Health, Bariatrics, Aged Care, and Palliative Care. Inclusion of a NP in your team will add value with improved patient outcomes, follow up and satisfaction.

Nurse Mentoring

NPs are nursing leaders so can support the growth and development of junior, or less experienced nurses within a primary health care practice, clinic or aged care facility. NPs can also assist junior medical practitioners, supporting their training particularly in specialty areas such as Diabetes, Chronic Disease or Mental Health.

Home Visits

NPs, particularly in Aged Care and Palliative Care, can support the home visit services provided by primary health care practices.

On Call or After Hours

NPs can provide these services for primary health care practices, reducing the workload, particularly where there may be a shortage of providers.

Health Promotion Programs

NPs are trained and skilled patient educators, with longer consultation times, delivery of health promotion and education programs can be used to support service needs.

MBS AND PBS FOR NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Nurse Practitioners (NP) can apply for provider numbers so their patients can access Medicare rebates for their services, and some referred services. Patients cannot access these rebates within public health services, or in other settings where government funding is received unless there is a specific exemption.

The following links will provide information on MBS for NPs:

<https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/midwives-nurse-pract-qan-da-nursepract>

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/services/medicare/bulk-billing-nurse-practitioners-and-midwives>

<http://www9.health.gov.au/mbs/fullDisplay.cfm?type=item&q=82200&qt=item>

NPs can prescribe medication as per their scope of practice and the individual State/Territory legislation or regulations pertaining to Drugs and Poisons. There is currently significant variation between States/Territories in regard to NP prescribing, information on these requirements can be sourced via the chief nurses office in each state, or the relevant State Department of Health.

NPs can prescribe medicines attracting a PBS rebate for their patients. There are some limitations on this, and these can be viewed at <http://www.pbs.gov.au/pbs/home>

Access to PBS rebates for Nurse Practitioners is clearly detailed for each medicine on the PBS, and Notes attached to specific medicines should be checked for additional restrictions. Should there be no NP symbol visible, this medicine is not listed on the PBS for patients of NPs, and a private prescription may be appropriate depending on the cost.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES INCLUDE:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/services/medicare/highly-specialised-drugs/resources/education-guide-writing-pbs-and-rpbs-prescriptions>

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/services/medicare/pbs-and-rpbs-stationery/how-get-your-pbs-stationery/stationery-nurse-practitioners-and-midwives>

<http://www.pbs.gov.au/info/general/faq>

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Transforming Health Care

ABOUT US

The Australian College of Nurse Practitioners (ACNP) is the national peak body for Nurse Practitioners and advanced practice nurses in Australia. The ACNP has developed the Transforming Health Care initiative to provide valuable information to the public about the benefits of having Nurse Practitioners as part of your usual health care team; and to advise the healthcare sector about the advantages of increasing access to Nurse Practitioners across inpatient, outpatient and community settings.

Supported by the Commonwealth Department of Health, the Transforming Health Care campaign highlights the vital role that Nurse Practitioners have in the healthcare and community environments. Our aim is to connect directly with Australian communities and promote the value of Nurse Practitioners in addressing service shortfalls thereby improving the health care outcomes of Australians.