

# Governance Framework

## Endorsed midwives prescribing across the ACT public health systems

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## Background

ACT Health values the contribution of midwives' evidence-based care in improving the outcomes for women and their babies. To facilitate public sector midwives to work to their full scope of practice a process to support prescribing in midwifery roles has been developed.

In 2010 provisions were made under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law) to enable registered midwives who have been endorsed by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) to prescribe scheduled medicines. The use of this endorsement in the ACT has been restricted to midwives working exclusively in private practice. Using endorsed midwives in the public hospital setting has the potential to improve outcomes by ensuring that women receive the treatment they need in a timelier way. Midwifery prescribing has been strongly endorsed by the Australian and New Zealand Council of Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers, recognising that midwifery prescribing improves access to medicines and promotes workforce flexibility. Evidence supports the safety and appropriateness of midwifery prescribing, including:

- Workforce flexibility
- Offset workforce shortages
- Cost saving
- Enhanced job satisfaction
- Self-confidence & professional autonomy
- Time efficiency
- High level maternal satisfaction
- Reduction in waiting times
- Less fragmented care
- Enhances medication adherence due to strong partnership with midwife promoting communication/questions
- Less prescribing errors<sup>1 2 3 4</sup>

The scope of practice for midwives in Australia is clearly defined and the Australian College of Midwives', National Midwifery Guidelines for Consultation and Referral, provides a framework for safe midwifery. Only midwives who hold the NMBA endorsement for

scheduled medicines will be eligible to apply for prescribing credentialing. Midwives are enabled to prescribe in the ACT in accordance with the following legislation:

[Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008 | PDF \(act.gov.au\)](#)

Endorsed midwives are prescribing in South Australian public health facilities and this framework draws on published SA Health documents<sup>5</sup>.

## Objective

The purpose of this Governance Framework is to ensure there is a consistent approach to determining the need, planning, implementation and evaluation of endorsed midwives prescribing in the ACT public sector. This Governance Framework will articulate the roles and responsibilities of ACT Health, Canberra Health Services (CHS) and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce (CPHB) executive leaders and endorsed midwives in relation to extended scope of practice role by:

- facilitating a clear understanding of the purpose and principal considerations for this role for service delivery which meet the needs of the woman and protects safety;
- supporting the application of a clear process to facilitate the development and integration of this role; and
- ensuring there is effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of this role through monitoring, review and evaluation in a clearly defined process to support safe delivery of care, the required level of competency and ongoing compliance to legislation and regulation.

## Scope

The Governance Framework applies across CHS and CPHB outlining the systems and processes required for good governance and successful establishment, planning, implementation and evaluation, review and ongoing monitoring for an endorsed midwife's scope of practice role.

## Principles

Extended scope of practice roles contributes to the achievement of a flexible, sustainable, responsive and adaptable workforce that delivers quality clinical and safe outcomes.

Contemporary directions in health services emphasise the importance of collaborative multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and inter-professional practice team approaches to care and recognise that no single health care provider or service model can adequately meet the complex requirements of today's health care consumers. Health services must consider the impact of extended scope of practice roles on the professional boundaries across disciplines in conjunction with any potential disinvestment in components of existing roles including where efficiencies will be achieved.

## Scope of Practice with Endorsement

Endorsement for a midwife is verified via the National Register of Practitioners. An endorsement of registration identifies midwives with additional qualifications and specific expertise which allows them to practice beyond the established, contemporary scope of practice.

The NMBA verifies and approves the endorsement and subsequent notation against the defined registration standard which includes measurement criteria for:

- Registration status
- Experience
- Education
- Demonstration of skills and competence
- Continuous Professional Development

Endorsed midwives utilise extended skills, experience and knowledge in assessment, planning, implementation, diagnosis and evaluation of care delivered. This could incorporate endorsement for scheduled medicines, the capacity to provide associated services, refer and order diagnostic investigations. The maintenance of competency and registration status at the level of endorsement is reviewed upon engagement and annually.

## Endorsed Midwife Role

The governance framework for the endorsed midwife role applies the following four stages to ensure the successful introduction of this practice role.

- initiation – review current and establish future need;
- strategic service planning;
- implementation; and
- evaluation, review and ongoing monitoring.

The endorsed midwife role must be:

- aligned to service need and models of care that reflects the strategic, national and state priorities, and support new workforce and health reform innovation in response to consumer need;
- consistent with legislative and regulatory requirements that enhance existing aspects of professional practice;
- consistent with financial improvement targets within the health care system;

CHS and CPHB executive leaders are responsible for ongoing review of the extended scope of practice of all health practitioners annually. Endorsed midwives should have their credentials reviewed upon engagement, and annually upon registration renewal with AHPRA. CHS and CPHB executive leaders are responsible for adhering to the principles of clinical governance, professional governance and corporate governance related to the endorsed midwife role.

## Detail

The NMBA carries out functions as set by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law). The NMBA regulates the practice of midwifery in Australia, and one of its key roles is to protect the public. The NMBA does this by developing registration standards, professional codes, guidelines and standards for practice which together establish the requirements for the professional and safe practice of midwives in Australia. ACT Health acknowledges the role of the NMBA and refers to the following document for credentialling endorsed midwives in the public sector.

[Nursing-and-Midwifery-Board---Registration-standard---Endorsement-for-scheduled-medicines---1-January-2017 \(2\).PDF](#)

The *Registration standard: Endorsement for scheduled medicines for midwives* describes the necessary qualifications and experience that a midwife must demonstrate when applying for and maintaining endorsement for scheduled medicines.

CHS and CPHB executive leaders will consider the following when reviewing the endorsed midwife scope of practice role:

- Is prescribing important to the model of care to be provided by the endorsed midwife?
- Does the Role Description for the endorsed midwife role include:
  - the endorsed midwives' regulatory requirement related to endorsement for prescribing as a minimum criterion for the position;
  - reference to all relevant national and state policies and standards in relation to prescribing to provide the context for prescribing; and
  - reference to the prescribing requirement for endorsed midwives under both National and State legislation.
- Do the outcome measures identify, evaluate and monitor the safety and effectiveness of the prescribing practices for the role?
- Is ordering diagnostic interventions important to the model of care to be provided by the endorsed midwife?

## Roles and Responsibilities

Executive Directors, Directors and other senior managers/ clinicians will:

- provide leadership and support to ensure the development, implementation and monitoring of the endorsed midwife role; and
- creating a culture which is supportive of endorsed midwives and enable optimal workforce capacity.

All CHS and CHPB endorsed midwives will:

- adhere to the principles and details within this framework and ensure they operate in accordance with them;
- comply with local procedures that relate to the endorsed midwife role; and



- comply with professional regulatory requirements.

## Risk Management

### Professional

There is a professional requirement for the endorsed midwife to comply with all legislative, professional regulatory requirements, standards, codes, guidelines and position statements relevant to the profession and articulated in this Framework. Processes are in place across CHS and CPHB sites for incident and risk management in relation to professional practice.

The risks associated with extended scope of practice roles can include:

- midwives exceeding their limitations, which can compromise quality and safety;
- lack of clearly defined guidelines/principles for extended scope of practice roles;
- lack of sustainability of the endorsed midwife roles; and
- under-developed or under-resourced education/professional development programs to support clinical practice.

### Financial

Strategic service planning for extended scope of practice roles in the ACT is essential to demonstrate viability, sustainability, cost efficient and effective care is delivered to our community. A lack of governance to support decision making for extended scope of practice roles has the potential to create financial risks for CHS and CPHB.

### Political

The provision of this governance framework ensures:

- Processes are in place that enable midwives to work to their full scope of practice;
- endorsed midwives will be provided with opportunities to broaden their skill sets and develop their potential as leaders;
- the endorsed midwife is responsive to the needs of the population across the full continuum of the health journey;
- the endorsed midwife delivers quality, effective and efficient clinical outcomes;



- the associated effects on the interdisciplinary team and approach to the woman's care is determined when advancing an endorsed midwife's scope of practice; and
- the endorsed midwife will be enabled to deliver best quality care, first time, every time;

The provision of this framework meets the needs of endorsed midwives regarding supporting endorsed scope of practice models of care throughout ACT public health services. The provision of this framework addresses the requirements for legislative compliance in relation to endorsed midwives' scope of practice roles. The provision of this framework addresses the accreditation requirements for credentialing endorsed midwives through the NMBA Registration Standard.

## Legal

The provision of this Governance Framework meets CHS and CPHB legal responsibility to protect the public's safety through the provision for appropriately educated, trained, qualified and regulated endorsed midwives.

## Evaluation

To demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of any new endorsed scope of practice role, the following indicators and outcomes must be demonstrated:

- ensures safe practice;
- improves access to care
- improves women's outcomes
- considers role sustainability;
- enables job satisfaction; and
- ensures capacity for competency measurement.

CHS and CPHB executive leaders will be able to demonstrate there are clear processes in place to assess and progress applications from endorsed midwives for the purpose of determining endorsement scope of practice roles in their health facilities. CHS and CPHB executive leaders will evidence that processes are in place to record and report the number of endorsed midwives practising in their service. The effectiveness of this framework will be



evaluated through a review process every 3 years unless changes are required prior to the scheduled review date.

## Associated Documents

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, 2021 *Endorsement for scheduled medicines for midwives* [Fact-sheet--Nursing-and-Midwifery-Board---Fact-sheet---Endorsement-for-scheduled-medicines-for-midwives \(1\).PDF](#)

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, 2017, *Registration Standard: Endorsement for scheduled medicines for midwives*. [Nursing-and-Midwifery-Board---Registration-standard---Endorsement-for-scheduled-medicines--1-January-2017 \(2\).PDF](#)

## Definitions

**Scope of practice:** The scope of midwifery practice is that in which midwives are educated, competent to perform and permitted by law. The actual scope of practice of individual practitioners is influenced by the settings in which they practise, the health needs of people, the level of competence and confidence of the midwife and the policy requirements of the service provider.

## References

1. Beadnell, C. (2018). The way forward: Expanded prescribing roles for nurses and midwives. *Australian Nursing & Midwifery Journal*, 25(8), 16.
2. Fontein-Kuipers, Y., Brouns, M., Driessen, E., Mestdagh, E., & Van Rompaey, B. (2019). Non-medical prescribing behaviour in midwifery practice: a mixed-methods review. *Evidence Based Midwifery*, 17(1), 27-34.
3. McHugh, Á., Hughes, M., Higgins, A., Buckley, T., Cashin, A., Casey, M., & Rohde, D. (2020). Non-medical prescribers: Prescribing within practice. *Journal of Prescribing Practice*, 2(2), 68-77.
4. Small, K., Sidebotham, M., Gamble, J., & Fenwick, J. (2016). Exploring midwifery prescribing in Australia. *Women and Birth*, 29(5), 436-442.
5. [SA Governance framework for advanced scope of practice roles and extended scope of practice roles in SA health Policy Directive.pdf](#)

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