



# Position Statement on Neonatal Workforce and Education Requirements to meet Core Competencies and Professional Development Requirements

## Purpose of Statement

This statement aims to provide a clear guideline for all providers of neonatal services to support the development of neonatal education pathways and professional development requirement programmes to support a nationally transferable nursing service.

## Background

The New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) has a clear commitment to supporting nurses to receive quality clinical and academic education throughout the career pathway inclusive of students through to senior nurses and nurse practitioner level (NZNO, 2011). Neonatal survival rates in New Zealand are recognised by the Ministry of Health as being among the world best and increased expertise of the nursing management was cited as a key factor in these outcomes (MOH, 2005).

NNCA endorses NZNO's commitment. NNCA supports the development and governance of neonatal specific education and core competence assessment programmes. These are designed to provide both safe and effective care to infants and whanau alongside provision of neonatal focussed clinical career pathways, in order to engage nurses and enhance recruitment and retention of staff in this specialty.

## **Recommendations**

NNCA makes the following recommendations:

- Training of neonatal nurses at a regional level aims to deliver a nationally consistent programme of clinical education based on evidence based neonatal practice and up to date learning resources. Use of the recently completed Neonatal Knowledge and Skills Framework (2014) to augment and guide orientation programmes and support nurses toward completion of professional development programmes.
- A recognised clinical career pathway be adopted in consultation with recognised tertiary education providers to deliver post graduate level neonatal specific education from new graduate level through to senior nurse and nurse practitioner levels.
- Larger regional units explore the opportunity to provide unit standard education to facilitate education for smaller units (MOH, 2010). This would allow a cost efficient opportunity for nurses from smaller units to access education and ensure portability of training expertise.
- Recognition of additional hours required for preceptorship and leadership requirements e.g. educational hours required to become preceptors or trainers and maintain required certification/competency to be recognised as additional to those allocated in the MECA
- Recognition that neonatal nurse education and training requires service specific education that is not available within the wider scope of general or specialised nursing. This limits opportunity for sharing

of education and increases the need for specialist education to be provided from within the neonatal service and tertiary sector.

## **Rationale**

The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003) provides a legislative framework to ensure all health care practitioners working within a regulated profession perform activities within the designated scope of their profession. The regulatory authority governing the nursing profession is the Nursing Council of New Zealand whose responsibilities include setting standards of clinical competence and accreditation of education programmes that confer the necessary professional qualifications.

Neonatal nurses work in a highly specialised area and engage in complex relationships and events with their level of training and expertise playing a key role in the ability to provide the appropriate interventions (BAPM, 2010; MOH, 2010). Access to ongoing service specific educational pathways is needed to maintain a competent nursing workforce and ensure a high quality service. Advanced nursing pathways have become a strategic component of the delivery of neonatal nursing care with the growth of Nurse Practitioners (NP's) working in extended nursing roles within the neonatal specialty.

The 2010 MOH report on specialist neonatal inpatient and home care services recommends all levels of neonatal care delivery include nurses with neonatal experience and/or undertaking relevant post registration studies. This is also reflected on an international level with the UK developing a career, education and competence framework for neonatal nurses which incorporate benchmarks, standards and competencies to ensure safe, enhance quality care for babies and families (BAPM, 2010; Rohan, Browne, Morgan, & Vinu-Job, 2015; )

Staff satisfaction and retention are also factors identified in the 2005 document and the implementation of neonatal nursing advanced career pathways and extended practice demonstrates organisational commitment to staff satisfaction and improved patient outcomes.

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**Developed by:** Leanne Baker, Paula Dellabarca and Annie Marshall on behalf of the NNCA Committee

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**Correspondence to:** [nurses@nzno.org.nz](mailto:nurses@nzno.org.nz)  
Principal author: Neonatal Nurses College Aotearoa New Zealand

**Mission statement**

NZNO is committed to the representation of members and the promotion of nursing and midwifery. NZNO embraces Te Tiriti o Waitangi and works to improve the health status of all peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand through participation in health and social policy development.

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