



HEALTH PROFESSIONS LICENSING AUTHORITY	
TITLE: Position statement the role of the registered nurse in providing midwifery care	
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 2005	REVIEW DATE/S: April 2007, October 2009
NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW: October 2011	
BOARD: Nursing and Midwifery Board of the Northern Territory	

Preamble

All members of the public are entitled to receive care and services from suitably qualified and registered practitioners.

Midwifery is a restricted practice area. This means that only registered nurses who are authorised to practise midwifery, or direct entry midwives may practise midwifery.

Can the registered nurse, who is not authorised to practise midwifery, ever provide midwifery care?

Section 128 of the *Health Practitioners Act 2004* includes a provision that will protect a person from prosecution if they undertake certain practices in an emergency situation. For example, if the registered nurse finds herself/himself in the situation where she/he needs to attend to an emergency delivery, the registered nurse would not be in breach of the Act, as section 128 would cover this activity.

Also, at times the registered nurse may undertake clinical tasks on the pregnant woman or the post-natal women, such as urinalysis, recording of blood pressure, routine and prescribed blood tests and weight checks. These activities, if they are undertaken at the direction and supervision of the medical officer or the midwife would not constitute a breach of the Act. The findings must be clearly documented in the ante-natal chart or the post-natal chart and reported to the medical officer or the midwife.

What is the scope of midwifery practise?

The Board has adopted the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council (ANMC) Code of Professional Conduct for Midwives in Australia. The scope of midwifery practise has been defined as:

- Giving advice, care and support to women preconceptually, and during pregnancy, labour, birth and the postpartum period;
- Assisting the birthing woman, conducting deliveries and caring for the infant;

- Recognising the signs of deviations from normal in the woman or infant which necessitate medical referral, and initiating the necessary emergency measures until medical assistance is available;
- Care of the woman and infant and providing supporting and guidance in the postnatal period;
- Providing health education and counselling for the woman, her family and the community, including preventative measures;
- Participating in health promotion and education which includes childbirth and parenthood classes;
- Providing comprehensive family planning information and advice;
- Participating in data collection and documentation of care, and maintenance of records; and
- Undertaking and participating in research for the development of midwifery practice.

Summary

Midwifery is a restricted practise area and only those persons who are authorised to practise midwifery are entitled to do so.

Providing midwifery care when not authorised to do so is a breach of the Act (except in emergency situation or at the direction and under the supervision of the medical officer or the midwife.