

POSITION STATEMENT

JULY 2009



GENERAL PRACTICE NURSES

General Practice Tasmania supports the role of general practice nurses and recognises the invaluable role that they play in the delivery of a range of high-quality primary healthcare services to their communities. There are currently close to 300 general practice nurses working in general practices across Tasmania and the workforce is steadily growing.

The utilisation of general practice nurses as part of a collaborative multi-disciplinary team environment will assist in the ongoing sustainability and viability of general practices into the 21st Century. General practice nurses are increasingly becoming an integral member of the primary care team in addressing health issues related to the ageing population, increasing prevalence of chronic disease and workforce shortages. General practice nurses work in a complementary and collaborative role to that of the general practitioner (GP) and allow general practices the opportunity of delivering an enhanced range of services.

General practice nurses are skilled health care professionals working for and on behalf of GPs. In this context general practice nurses may assess, plan, coordinate and in some cases manage the care of patients in the general practice setting particularly in the areas of chronic disease management, health screening, health education and promotion, clinical care services, triage, and the development and monitoring of practice systems. General practice nurses consistently play a role in assessment (including health assessments of people over 75 years), therapeutic care and treatment, wound care and diagnostic services, infection control and sterilisation, cold chain monitoring, immunisation and clinical data management.

General Practice Tasmania recognises that practice nurses:

- Possess a specific set of skills and knowledge that are integral to a collaborative multi-disciplinary primary care team;
- Play a key role in achieving and maintaining safety and quality in general practice;
- Perform a diverse and adaptable role that is influenced by factors such as the practice population, nurses' qualifications, practice structure, professional standards and national incentives and programs; and
- Are able to reduce the workload pressure on the GP workforce.

General Practice Tasmania also recognises that the practice of general practice nurses is governed by the Nursing Board of Tasmania and is regulated by State legislation.

It is the position of General Practice Tasmania that:

- Expansion of the role of general practice nurses must be informed by the needs of communities and based on consultation with the primary care team;
- The general practice nurse is an expanding and evolving role, which should be supported through professional development and education specifically aimed at nursing in the general practice context; and
- The roles and responsibilities of the practice nurse, including clinical and procedural guidelines, must be clearly defined and developed by members of the general practice team.

The General Practice Tasmania Network is a unique statewide infrastructure that supports contemporary general practice in Tasmania by linking GPs with each other, by supporting all members of the general practice team and, increasingly, by employing or supporting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dieticians and psychologists to be part of the primary care team. General Practice Tasmania is also a proud member of the Australian General Practice Network.

A proud member of



The General Practice Tasmania Network has developed position statements on various issues relevant to the operation of the health services system and relating to general practice across the State. These position statements reflect the views of Tasmanian GPs and the primary care community.

Each position statement is based upon research and the analysis of relevant literature as well as an assessment of the broader health sector environment. The position statements are developed collaboratively between the State Based Organisation, the three Divisions of General Practice and the Workforce Support Agency within Tasmania. During the development of each statement the Divisions and Workforce Agency consult with their Tasmanian GP members and Boards respectively. Prior to release the statements are ratified by the Boards of each of the organisations that constitute the General Practice Tasmania Network.

Collaboration with other general practice organisations (eg General Practice Training Tasmania, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, etc) is also a feature in the development of some position statements. The co-endorsement of position statements maximises the effectiveness of these statements and represents a strong collective view.

It is expected that position statements will evolve to reflect the ever-changing health and general practice environment. Accordingly feedback and comment is invited to ensure that the position statements continue to be relevant and accurately reflect the views of the Tasmanian general practice and primary care community.

To provide feedback on any position statement please contact any of the organisations that constitute the General Practice Tasmania Network:



GENERAL PRACTICE SOUTH
CONTACT DETAILS
Chair: Dr Elizabeth Webber
Executive Officer: Mr Richard McKercher
Telephone: 6208 7300



GENERAL PRACTICE NORTH
CONTACT DETAILS
Chair: Dr Beth Mulligan
Chief Executive Officer: Mr Phil Edmondson
Telephone: 6331 9296



GENERAL PRACTICE NORTH WEST
CONTACT DETAILS
Chair: Mr Daryl Guest
Executive Officer: Ms Elvie Hales
Telephone: 6432 1440



GENERAL PRACTICE WORKFORCE
CONTACT DETAILS
Chair: Dr Fiona Joske
Chief Executive Officer: Mr Peter Barns
Telephone: 6334 2355



GENERAL PRACTICE TASMANIA
CONTACT DETAILS
Chair: Dr Nicholas Barnes
Chief Executive Officer: Ms Sarah Male
Telephone: 6224 1114

The General Practice Tasmania Network is a unique statewide infrastructure that supports contemporary general practice in Tasmania by linking GPs with each other, by supporting all members of the general practice team and, increasingly, by employing or supporting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dieticians and psychologists to be part of the primary care team. General Practice Tasmania is also a proud member of the Australian General Practice Network.

