Getting back into nursing or midwifery

Once your registration has lapsed, you are not automatically entitled to be reinstated. Here is some information about returning to nursing or midwifery practice that may assist you in understanding the requirements.

Registration is governed by the national standards of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) and is managed by the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency.

Currently registered but not working?

It is now more important than ever that you stay connected to the profession, even if you are not currently working.

To renew your registration each year you must declare that you have:

- maintained your recency of practice, and
- met your continuing professional development obligations.

Making a false declaration is against the law.

Maintaining recency of practice means practising nursing or midwifery within the preceding five years for a period equivalent to a minimum of three months full-time. ‘Practising nursing or midwifery’ is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care and includes working in areas like coordination, management, education, policy and research.

To maintain your registration you must also participate in at least 20 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) annually for each profession in which you are registered. Your CPD must be relevant to your area of practice and must be documented.

You can find out more at: http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx

Thinking of having a break?

It can be time consuming and costly to get re-registered. Additionally, it may be difficult to demonstrate recency of practice and CPD. So if you are not currently employed as a nurse or midwife, or you are thinking of taking a break from nursing or midwifery, consider:

- continuing a level of employment so that you can meet the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia’s (NMBA) recency requirement. Three-months full-time employment in five years is about three to four weeks work per year.
- maintaining up-to-date records of employment (for example, hours and dates worked and copies of position descriptions).
- maintaining connections to your profession (for example, by joining relevant special interest groups, networks and subscribing to journals or online forums).
- keeping your professional portfolio and curriculum vitae up to date, including evidence of CPD activities.

Five years can pass very quickly, so a strategy to assist could be to make an annual date (like tax time) to:

- review your decision about leaving nursing.
- update your work and CPD records.
- check the NMBA website for any changes in registration requirements that may affect you or your decision.

Think carefully before letting your registration lapse. Once your registration has lapsed, you are not automatically entitled to get it back. It is now quite involved to become re-registered, even if you have only been off the register a short time.
The NMBA will assess your application and will probably require you to complete an approved re-entry program if you:

- are registered but haven’t maintained recency of practice within the last five years.
- haven’t been registered for five to ten years.

If you have not been registered for longer than ten years you will need advice from the NMBA about your options.

Not sure if you are still registered?

You can check the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) website to see if you’re currently on the nursing or midwifery register: http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registers-of-Practitioners.aspx

**If you have let your registration lapse**

The NMBA is responsible for deciding what you need to do to get back on the nursing and/or midwifery registers. A key consideration is how long you have been out of the workforce.

With national registration, the requirements for registration are consistent across each state and territory under the Health Practitioners Regulation National Law (2009).

Former nurses and midwives may underestimate the requirements of contemporary clinical practice and how much change there has been. Some people think that ‘remembering the basics of good care’ will be enough to enable them to make the transition back to work. Unfortunately getting your registration back can be quite involved.

To help you make a decision about whether re-entering the profession is the right option for you, here are some things to consider.

**About re-entry programs**

Re-entry is a formal program of theory and clinical practice exposure and assessment to prepare nurses and midwives to re-enter the register. Re-entry focuses on ensuring that the re-entrant meets the relevant NMBA-agreed national competency standards.

If the NMBA advises you that you need to undertake a re-entry course, you need to know:

- Re-entry programs are available through interstate education providers.
- The prices of re-entry programs vary, with providers charging up to $10,000.
- Re-entry programs can take between six and 26 weeks (full-time), which includes theory as well as supervised practice. During the program you are not registered and cannot be employed (or paid) as a nurse or midwife. Your regular income will most likely be affected.
- You may need to consider other costs associated with undertaking a program such as childcare, travel or accommodation.
- Finishing a re-entry program means you are eligible to apply for registration, but you may not be able to work immediately. NMBA will need time to consider your application.
- Although you may have been quite senior when you left nursing or midwifery, this does not mean you are automatically entitled to return to your former grading and pay rate.

**Finding a re-entry program**

You will need to identify a program to complete. The NMBA website lists the accredited programs at: http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Accreditation/Approved-Programs-of-study.aspx

The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services is working to develop arrangements with education providers to support program completion in the state. Contact the Department to receive the most current information about this work.

Applying for a position in a re-entry program does not guarantee you a place in that program. Re-entry providers assess potential re-entrants for their capacity to meet the requirements of the contemporary clinical environment to be sure they have a realistic chance of successfully completing the program.
Assistance for re-entry programs

The Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services provides scholarships to support eligible Tasmanian residents undertaking an accredited re-entry program. The scholarship will cover the cost of program enrolment fees, however other costs (such as lost income and travel) must be met by participants. To find out about this scholarship you are advised to contact the Department prior to enrolling in a re-entry program.

The Australian Government also offers scholarship support for individuals. These scholarships are available through the Australian College of Nursing (previously the RCNA) and have specific eligibility and application processes. Visit the website at: http://www.rcna.org.au/wcm/

Find out more

For questions about registration, the list of approved (accredited) re-entry programs and the NMBA registration requirements, contact:
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
Ph: 1300 419 495
www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au

For questions about scholarships to support returning to practice in Tasmania, contact:
Nursing and Midwifery Unit
Department of Health and Human Services
Ph: 03-6233 6777
Email: cnah@dhhs.tas.gov.au

The DHHS acknowledges the Department of Human Services Victoria Returning to Nursing website and Fact Sheet as a major reference to this document. It can be access through http://www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing/returning