NATIONAL IMMUNISATION EDUCATION FRAMEWORK FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

## PREFACE

The *National Immunisation Education Framework for Health Professionals* (the National Framework) updates the *National Guidelines for Immunisation Education for Registered Nurses and Midwives* (the National Guidelines) endorsed by the National Immunisation Committee in 2000.

The National Framework responds to the contemporary environment for immunisation education programs, which is influenced by innovative workforce arrangements, good practice in learning and teaching, new service and program delivery models, and improved health literacy.

The availability of a diverse network of appropriately trained immunisation providers is necessary to ensure equitable access to quality immunisation services.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AEFI Adverse Events Following Immunisation

CPD Continuing Professional Development

IPCWG Immunisation Provider Competency Working Group

NIC National Immunisation Committee

NIP National Immunisation Program

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## PART I

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

Immunisation continues to be a cost-effective national public health priority in Australia, and an appropriately, skilled and educated health workforce is important in achieving higher immunisation coverage rates and contributing to successful implementation of the *National Immunisation Strategy 2013-2018* (the ‘Strategy’)*.*

The National Framework has its origins in the *National Guidelines for Immunisation Education for Registered Nurses and Midwives* 2000 (the ‘National Guidelines’). The National Guidelines, endorsed by the National Immunisation Committee (NIC), were developed for course assessors, educators and training organisations to promote consistency across states and territories among staff involved in the implementation and application of immunisation procedures. While the National Guidelines informed the development of standardised curriculum for registered nurses and midwives, they were also utilised to supplement the education and training of other health professionals involved in immunisation, such as pharmacists and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers / practitioners.

* 1. Redevelopment of the National Guidelines

A range of health professionals play an important role towards maintaining high immunisation coverage rates and maintaining public confidence in immunisation programs through the provision of accurate and comprehensive information about vaccines and immunisation programs.

The *National Immunisation Strategy* 2013 – 2018 recognises an adequately skilled and educated immunisation workforce as a priority, and the availability of a diverse network of providers as necessary to ensure equitable access to services. This document supports the Strategy by providing a core education framework for developing nationally consistent immunisation education programs.

The NIC established the Immunisation Provider Competency Working Group (IPCWG) with the primary purpose of reviewing the National Guidelines and to assist with the development of new National Guidelines. The IPCWG considered the current immunisation workforce in states and territories, the regulatory framework for immunisation providers in jurisdictions, good practice in immunisation education programs nationally and internationally and a review of the training needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers / practitioners.

To meet the objective, a literature review and key stakeholder consultations informed the development of a series of papers.

**Literature review**

The literature review considered the best practice in immunisation education including theoretical and clinical assessment nationally and internationally. The review also considered an international model of Indigenous health care that contributed to increased immunisation coverage rates in their respective communities. The learnings from the review supported the need for national guidelines, a consideration for an increase in the number of immunisation providers and the need to improve national consistency in immunisation education provision.

**Regulatory framework**

Review of the regulatory framework in Australia highlighted that while responsibilities for the delivery of health services and the Immunise Australia Program are shared between the Commonwealth and states and territories, legislation governing the use of drugs and poisons, and hence administration of vaccines, is the domain of states and territories. Medical practitioners by virtue of their qualifications are legislated to prescribe and administer vaccines and this does not vary across states and territories. Categories of health professionals who are not medical practitioners and their authorisation to administer vaccines independent of a medical order currently vary across states and territories as do the circumstances in which categories of health professionals can administer vaccines.

It was also noted that it is the responsibility of immunisation education providers to ensure that their courses meet requirements set out in state and territory legislation and other policy documents (such as the National Guidelines), and, in some cases, to apply for approval for their courses as meeting these requirements.

**Education programs**

There are currently nine immunisation education programs recognised by one or more states and territories as an approved level of training to lead to independent immunisation if all other legislative conditions are met. All programs are available to registered nurses, a smaller number specify entry for registered midwives, two offer entry to enrolled nurses and registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers / practitioners, and one specifies other health practitioners including pharmacists.

**Implications**

The background research undertaken to inform the redevelopment of the National Guidelines supported an approach that:

* Provided clear direction about the core areas of knowledge and skills to enable operation as an independent immunisation provider; and
* Recognised the role for a range of non-medical health professionals, in addition to medical practitioners, to be involved in the administration of vaccines and the continuing interest by new categories of health professionals not traditionally engaged in this area.

The research also identified opportunities to address portability of training and its implications for a quality and sufficient workforce. Refer to Appendix A for the documents which contributed to the development of the *National Immunisation Education Framework for Health Professionals* (the National Framework).

* 1. The National Framework for Immunisation Education for Health Professionals

The National Framework replaces the 2000 National Guidelines for Immunisation Education for Registered Nurses and Midwives.

The National Framework is a set of minimum curriculum content requirements and must be used as a resource by those involved in immunisation program management and education to assist with the planning and implementation of immunisation education strategies for eligible health professionals at undergraduate or post-graduate level, or through in-service modes of education.

For education programs to be nationally recognised they must also meet a set of nationally agreed program standards that relate to the curriculum design, assessment, program management, resourcing and evaluation. A template for the assessment of these standards is currently being developed and will support the process for mutual recognition of qualifications across states and territories.

* 1. Structural supports promoting national consistency

Consistent with nationally agreed standards for practice for immunisation education, a range of supports have been nationally agreed that reflect the contemporary needs of a mobile workforce and the national approach to the regulation of health practitioners. In addition, the roles and responsibilities of states and territories are acknowledged and the opportunity for national mechanisms to support a consistent approach has been agreed. These supports include:

**Minimum course content**

To enable national recognition, providers of immunisation education courses must articulate the learning outcomes for immunisation providers as outlined in the National Framework.

**Education provider standards**

Education providers delivering immunisation courses leading to independent practice as an immunisation provider are required to be either an accredited higher education provider or affiliated with an accredited higher education provider or to be a Registered Training Organisation.

**Successful course completion**

Learning outcomes are incorporated into every course but it is not the sole responsibility of education providers to offer clinical practice.

The inclusion of clinical assessment into education courses will reflect the student cohort requirements as necessary. Recognising a number of registered health professionals obtain the necessary clinical technical skills as part of undergraduate education programs, students of immunisation programs will need to be individually assessed to determine the need for relevant education in clinical technical skills . For example, in relation to individual practitioner needs, an education provider may deem it necessary for successful completion of a clinical assessment prior to issuing the individual with a certificate. In recognition that some professions do not include the requisite clinical skills as part of undergraduate education , some immunisation education programs will require the inclusion of a clinical skills assessment component in their training, for example, pharmacists.

**Maintaining authorisation**

The health professional is responsible for achieving and maintaining their authorisation.

**Authorisation/Endorsement of health professionals to administer vaccines**

Traditionally, medical practitioners have been the only health professionals legislated to possess and administer vaccines. Most states and territories now legislate specific health professional groups to administer vaccines. Authorisation to practice and the conditions relating to authorisation is provided through state and territory governance arrangements. The conditions relating to authorisation may vary between jurisdictions. These conditions may relate to:

* Qualification, for example, registered nurse, enrolled nurse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers / practitioner, pharmacist, registered midwife;
* Administration to specific age groups;
* Administration of specific vaccines; and
* Evidence of clinical competence and/or annual updates.

To support a range of modalities of delivery of education programs and in recognition that some health professionals may already have recognised technical qualifications for administering vaccines, clinical assessment is not a mandatory requirement under the National Framework. In line with the above statements (successful course completion), if a health professional has not previously been assessed as competent in the technical aspects used in vaccine administration a clinical assessment should be included as part of their education.

Immunisation providers seeking authorisation to immunise independent of a medical order, should refer to the Department of Health in the jurisdiction they wish to practice, for information on conditions to authorisation other than the successful completion of a recognised education program.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE USE OF THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

* 1. Aim

The National Framework is provided to assist in the development of nationally consistent immunisation education programs. The National Framework sets an agreed benchmark for immunisation education programs to meet in order to be considered as a nationally recognised program, and support transferability of qualifications across states and territories. Through a nationally agreed set of core standards, the National Framework aims to ensure the provision of high quality immunisation education programs for health professionals who are not medical practitioners but are seeking authorisation to possess and administer vaccines without a medical order.

* 1. Structure

The National Framework outlines domains of learning and the principal standards for practice relevant for any immunisation education program. Learning objectives are presented under each standard for practice. These learning objectives relate to education programs that address the provision of all aspects of the National Immunisation Program.

The following domains, domain topics and learning outcomes are described in the National Framework.

**DOMAIN 1 - THE GLOBAL AND AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT FOR IMMUNISATION**

**1.1 Public health and immunisation**

*Learning Outcome: Demonstrates an understanding of the impact of immunisation programs as a public health measure.*

*1.2* **The National Immunisation Program and the National Immunisation Program Schedule**

*Learning Outcome: Demonstrates knowledge of the National Immunisation Program and the National Immunisation Program Schedule.*

**DOMAIN 2 - THE IMMUNE SYSTEM AND IMMUNISATION**

**2.1 The immunological principles of immunisation**

*Learning Outcome: Demonstrates knowledge of the immune response and how vaccines work.*

**2.2 Vaccine preventable diseases and epidemiology**

*Learning Outcome: Demonstrates knowledge of the key features of vaccine preventable diseases.*

**2.3 Vaccine types and components**

*Learning Outcome: Demonstrates and applies knowledge of the various vaccine types and their components.*

**DOMAIN 3 - THE LAW, ETHICS AND IMMUNISATION**

**3.1 Legal and ethical considerations for immunisation practice**

*Learning Outcome: Demonstrates and applies knowledge of the current legal and ethical issues related to immunisation.*

**DOMAIN 4 - IMMUNISATION PRACTICE**

**4.1 Information resources and communicating risk**

Learning Outcome: Demonstrates knowledge of the risks and benefits of vaccination and utilises relevant information resources.

**4.2 The management of storage, handling and transport of vaccines**

Learning Outcome: Demonstrates knowledge of the cold chain and implements the current national guidelines when storing, handling and transporting vaccines.

**4.3 Vaccine safety**

Learning Outcome: Demonstrates knowledge of the management and reporting of adverse events following immunisation**.**

**4.4 Vaccine administration**

Learning Outcome: Demonstrates knowledge of the requirements for the delivery of a safe immunisation service.

**4.5 Documentation and reporting**

Learning Outcome: Demonstrates the knowledge of the principles of accurate documentation and reporting in accordance with national and state/territory guidelines, policies and procedures.

**4.6 Strategies for improving immunisation coverage rates**

Learning Outcome: Demonstrates knowledge of strategies and resources to improve immunisation coverage rates in Australia.

## PART II

CORE LEARNING OBJECTIVESAND OUTCOMES FOR IMMUNISATION PROVIDERS

## 1. THE GLOBAL AND AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT FOR IMMUNISATION

## Public health and immunisation

**Demonstrates an understanding of the impact immunisation programs have had as a public health measure**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to:

1. Describe the public health aims of immunisation programs and explain why immunisation is an effective and safe public health strategy
2. Explain the concept of herd immunity
3. Explain the prevalence of vaccine preventable diseases in other countries and why we need to continue to vaccinate even when diseases are no longer a problem in Australia
4. Explain how the effectiveness of immunisation programs is measured

## National Immunisation Program and the National Immunisation Program Schedule

**Demonstrates knowledge of the National Immunisation Program and the National Immunisation Program Schedule**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to:

1. Identify the strategic priorities of the National Immunisation Strategy
2. Describe the National Immunisation Program and the role of the key stakeholders
3. Describe how service delivery occurs across Australia
4. Discuss the eligible groups and the specific vaccine recommendations listed on the National Immunisation Program (NIP) Schedule
5. Understand the rationale for the different state and territory schedule variations
6. Assess national and state/territory vaccine coverage rate reports against national targets

## 2. THE IMMUNE SYSTEM AND IMMUNISATION

## The immunological principles of vaccination

**Demonstrates knowledge of the immune response and how vaccines work.**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to:

1. List and differentiate between the various types of immunity
2. Explain and differentiate between the primary and secondary immune response
3. Discuss the immune response to vaccines
4. Explain conditions that affect the immune response to vaccines
5. Describe the rationale behind the placement of vaccines on the National Immunisation Program

## Vaccine preventable diseases and epidemiology

**Demonstrates knowledge of the key features of vaccine preventable diseases.**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to:

1. Describe the epidemiology, clinical features and complications of common vaccine preventable diseases
2. Identify the rationale for the vaccine recommendations relating to the common vaccine preventable diseases

## Vaccine types and components

**Demonstrates and applies knowledge of the various vaccine types and their components.**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to:

1. Discuss the types of vaccines available, as listed in the current edition of the Australian Immunisation Handbook, and identify key differences between each type
2. Define the terms vaccine efficacy, immunogenicity and vaccine effectiveness
3. Identify the purpose of individual components contained in vaccines

## 3. THE LAW, ETHICS AND IMMUNISATION

## Legal and ethical considerations for immunisation practice

**Demonstrates and applies knowledge of the current legal and ethical issues related to immunisation.**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to:

1. Outline the legal requirements that relate to obtaining valid and informed consent
2. Identify the state and territory legislation relevant to the practice of immunisation
3. Identify the national legislation relevant to the practice of immunisation
4. Discuss the professional accountability in immunisation practice as per the relevant codes and standards of practice stipulated by the relevant Board for health practitioners regulated under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme
5. Discuss the key ethical issues that affect immunisation practice

## 4. IMMUNISATION PRACTICE

## 4.1 Information resources and communicating risk

**Demonstrates knowledge of the risks and benefits of vaccination and utilises relevant information resources.**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to:

1. Discuss the effects of common vaccine preventable disease compared with the side effects of the vaccines
2. Identify credible sources of information appropriate to individual needs
3. Identify factors influencing an individual’s decision making process to vaccinate
4. Recognise and respond to the different communication needs of the individual and culturally diverse populations

## The management of storage, handling and transport of vaccines

**Demonstrates knowledge of the cold chain and implements the current national guidelines when storing, handling and transporting vaccines.**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to:

1. Identify the principles of safe vaccine storage management
2. List the key recommendations for inclusion in a vaccine management protocol
3. Identify the steps involved in responding to a cold chain breach
4. Apply the current national policies, protocols and procedures for management of a cold chain breach

## Vaccine safety

**Demonstrates knowledge of the management and reporting of adverse events following immunisation.**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to:

1. Define the term Adverse Event Following Immunisation (AEFI)
2. Identify and discuss the management of common and uncommon events following immunisation
3. Differentiate between a vasovagal episode and anaphylaxis
4. Discuss the management of a vasovagal episode
5. Discuss the management of anaphylaxis
6. Discuss future vaccination recommendations following an AEFI
7. Describe the national and state/territory policies and procedures for documenting and reporting an AEFI
8. Describe the role of the Therapeutic Goods Administration in relation to the safety of vaccines

## Vaccine administration

**Demonstrates knowledge of the requirements for the delivery of a safe immunisation service.**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to:

1. Discuss the pre-vaccination screening process and identify conditions or circumstances that require specific action
2. List the steps to correctly select, prepare and administer vaccines appropriate for the individual
3. Identify situations where vaccines are overdue and develop a catch-up schedule in accordance with the recommendations from the current Australian Immunisation Handbook
4. Identify true contraindications for all vaccines and the common false contraindications
5. List the recommendations for post-vaccination care
6. Identify the Work Health and Safety requirements that relate to delivering an immunisation encounter

## Documentation and reporting

**Demonstrates knowledge of the principles of accurate documentation and reporting in accordance with national and state/territory guidelines, policies and procedures.**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify and list the recording requirements relating to the provision of immunisation services
2. Describe the process of submitting information to the immunisation registers
3. Discuss the impact of inaccurate and delayed reporting to immunisation registers

## Strategies for improving immunisation coverage rates

**Demonstrates knowledge of strategies and resources to improve immunisation coverage rates in Australia.**

**Learning objectives**

On completion of this topic the health professional will be able to perform the following:

1. Identify areas of low coverage and discuss potential barriers
2. Describe current national programs aimed at improving immunisation coverage rates
3. Identify recent immunisation promotional activities that aim to improve immunisation coverage rates

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