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health

Factsheet 4

Getting back into nursing or midwifery

Once your registration has lapsed, you are not automatically entitled to get it back.

If you've let your registration lapse (or you're registered but feel you need some help to regain the confidence and competence to work after a break), here is some information about getting back into nursing or midwifery practice.

Currently registered but not working as a nurse or midwife?

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

To be able to renew your registration each year, you must declare that you have:

- maintained your recency of practice
- 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 past five years for a period equivalent to a minimum of three months full-time. Practising nursing or midwifery includes working in areas like coordination, management, education, policy and research.

To maintain your registration you must now also participate in at least 20 hours of continuing professional development (CPD) each year. Your CPD must be relevant to your area of practice and must be documented.

You can find out about the current mandatory requirements for recency of practice and CPD for all nurses and midwives at:

<http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx>



Thinking of having a break from nursing or midwifery?

It can now be very costly and time consuming to get re-registered, so if you are not currently employed as a nurse or midwife, or you are thinking of taking a break from nursing or midwifery, we strongly suggest you:

- stage your decision to stop work by continuing to meet the required registration standards (CPD and recency of practice) for at least several years
- consider keeping up a number of shifts through your employer's nurse bank, or through an agency, so that you can meet the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (NMBA) recency requirement (three-months full-time equivalent in five years is about three to four weeks work per year)
- keep up-to-date records of this work (for example hours and dates worked and a copy of your position description)
- maintain connections to your profession (for example by joining relevant special interest groups, networks and subscribing to journals or online forums)
- keep your professional portfolio and curriculum vitae up to date, including evidence of any CPD activities.

Five years can pass very quickly so make an annual date (like tax time) to:

- review your decision about leaving nursing – have your circumstances changed?
- get your work and CPD records up to date
- check the NMBA website for any changes in registration requirements that may affect you or your decision.

Finally, think **very carefully** before letting your registration lapse.

Once your registration has lapsed, you are not automatically entitled to get it back. It is now quite complicated to become re-registered, even if you have only been off the register a very short time.

You will probably have to do a NMBA-approved **re-entry course** 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 need will advice from the NMBA about your options.

Not sure if you are still registered? You can check the 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

There are many reasons why nurses and midwives let their registration lapse, such as family responsibilities (caring for children and ageing parents), a change of careers or different financial status. Sometimes, time just slips away and there is a mistaken belief that it's easy to get your registration back again if you need to.

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

The flowchart on the following page outlines the re-registration process if you have let your registration lapse.

Former nurses and midwives who have not been in practice for a considerable time (10 years or more) may underestimate the requirements of contemporary clinical practice and how much change there has been in the underlying knowledge, role and skills of modern nursing and midwifery.

Some people think that 'remembering the basics of good care' will be enough to enable them to make the transition back to work, but unfortunately getting your registration back and gaining employment can be costly and time consuming.

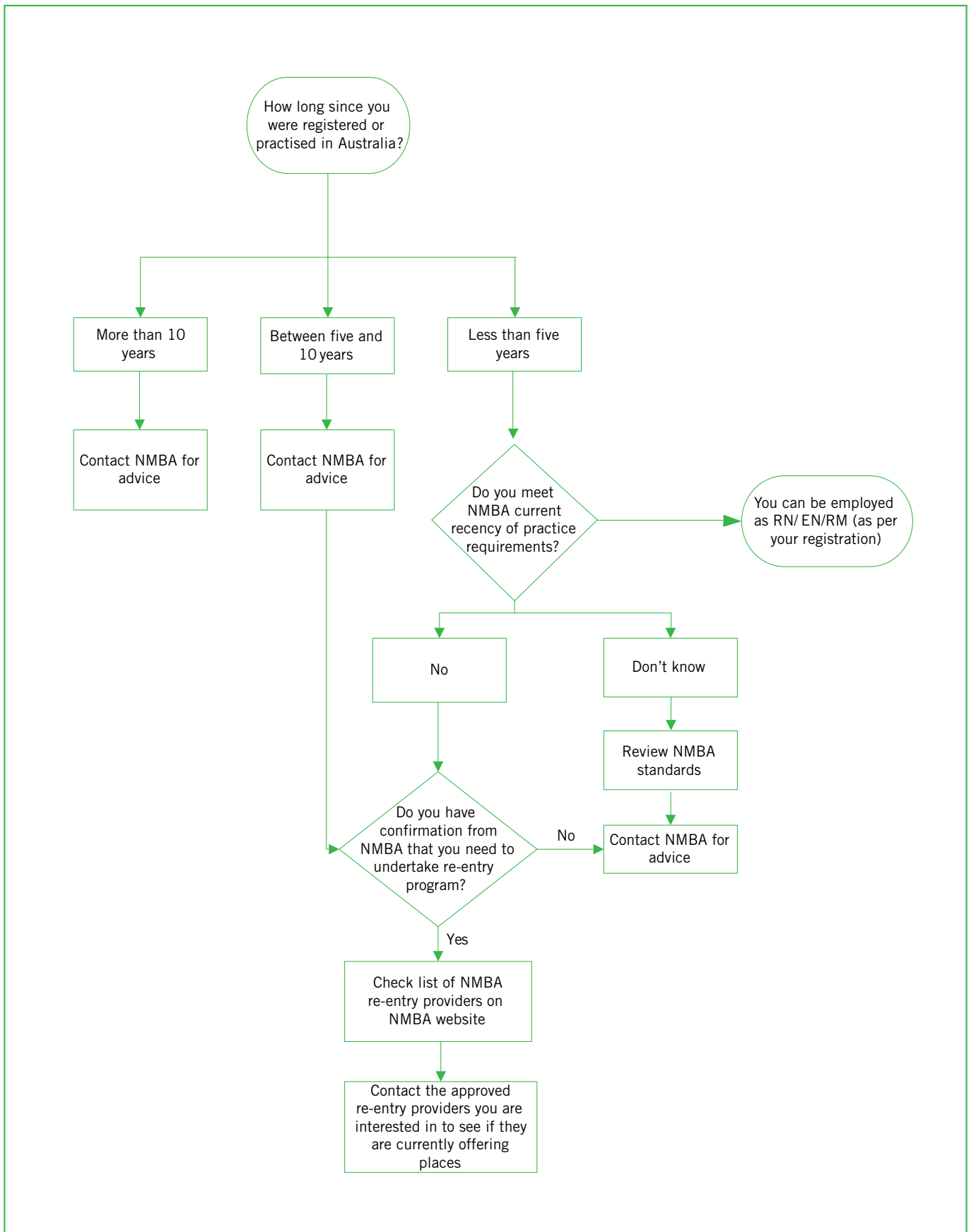
To help you make a decision about whether re-entering the profession is the right option for you, here are some things to weigh up.

About re-entry courses

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, here are some things you need to know:

- The prices of re-entry courses vary, with private providers charging more than public health services. The course can cost up to \$10,000.
- Re-entry courses can take between six and 14 weeks (full-time), which includes theory as well as supervised practice. During the course you are not registered and cannot be employed (and paid) as a nurse or midwife. Courses are generally full-time, so your regular income will be affected.
- You may need to consider other costs such as childcare, travel or accommodation (if the program is not local to you).
- Finishing a re-entry course means you are eligible to apply for registration, but you may not be able to work immediately. It will take some time for the NMBA to consider your application, and once registered you will have to plan for a period in which you apply for jobs and attend interviews. You will not be earning an income from nursing or midwifery during this time.
- 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. Some industrial agreements have provisions for how this is managed but different employers will manage it in different ways. You will need to discuss this at interview.



Finding a re-entry course

- Applying for a position in a re-entry course does not guarantee you a place in that course. Re-entry providers assess potential re-entrants for their capacity to meet the realities and requirements of the contemporary clinical environment to be sure they have a good chance of successfully completing the program. If you have been out of practice for a longer period of time and have not stayed connected in some way with the changing practices and knowledge base, the course provider may be reluctant to accept you into their course.
- Re-entry courses in Victoria are run by both employers (like health services) and training organisations. While they may have a course approved by the NMBA, organisations do not run courses all the time. For example, many health services only run courses when they have specific vacancies that can be filled by a re-entrant, and training organisations may run courses between semesters when they have gaps and can get access to the clinical placements (such as at the end of the academic year).
- There could be a waiting list for some programs, so you may need to consider programs offered out of your area. You may also have to travel to a different site (health service) for the clinical part of the course.
- When there is relatively high employment, employers can be more selective about the people they hire and the skills and experience they want. At present, the global financial situation means that many people (including healthcare professionals) are deferring retirement and therefore vacancy rates are low. When looking for work, potential re-entrants are competing with early graduates or nurses from overseas who have current knowledge and exposure to clinical practice.

Assistance for re-entry courses

The Victorian Government provides some support to employers in the public health system who provide re-entry courses to nurses they are planning to employ. If public health services are offering employment to re-entrants, they can apply for funding to offset the cost of providing the course. They must provide the course free to the participant; however the other costs of undertaking the course (lost income, travel et cetera) must be met by participants:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing/returning/information-for-public-health-services>

From time to time public health services may choose to offer re-entry places to individuals for a fee and with no offer of employment. They are not eligible for government funding for these places and there is no obligation for public health services to run courses.

The Commonwealth Government also offers support for eligible individuals. These programs are available through the Royal College of Nursing Australia (RCNA) and will have specific eligibility and application processes:

<http://www.rcna.org.au/wcm/>

About refresher programs

A refresher course is one way to get back into practice after a break, but employers are more likely to consider employing you if you have been undertaking ongoing professional development.

If you are currently registered in Victoria, but have had a break from practice (or are shifting from one area to another, such as returning to acute hospital work after a long time in a community role, or moving from management back to clinical work) you might want to consider a refresher program to update your knowledge and clinical skills.

Refresher courses are not managed by the NMBA.

Victorian health services offer on-the-job refresher programs to nurses or midwives returning to work to help fill their vacancies. This is one way to work and be paid a salary while bringing your skills and knowledge up to date.

To find out about refresher programs, you should:

- contact prospective employers to let them know you are available and find out if they would consider you for employment through a refresher course
- put together a cover letter and a curriculum vitae for them explaining why you would be an asset
- suggest the time and assistance you think you may require. You may need anywhere between one and twelve weeks of supervision
- indicate your willingness to be flexible – you may not be offered the position you want, but rather one where the employer has a gap or vacancy
- Remember that refresher programs can be a way of entering a whole different area of practice in a supported way – a challenge, but a great opportunity to try something new.

Find out more

For questions about registration, the list of approved (accredited) re-entry courses and the NMBA registration standards, contact:

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia:

Ph: 1300 419 495

www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au

To find out about employment as a nurse or midwife in Victoria, refer to factsheet 5.