



## Primary health care

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation supports the definition of primary health care in the Declaration of Alma Ata:

*Primary health care is essential health care based on practical scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development in the spirit of self-reliance and self determination. It forms an integral part of both the country's health system of which it is the central function and main focus and of the overall social and economic development of the community. It is the first level of contact of individuals, the family, and community, with the national health system bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work and constitutes the first element of a continuing health care process.<sup>1</sup>*

Primary health care acknowledges a social view of health and promotes the concept of self reliance to individuals and communities in exercising control over conditions which determine their health.

Primary health care is both an approach to dealing with health issues and a level of service provision. As an approach primary health care deals with the main health problems and issues experienced by the community. It may include care and treatment services, rehabilitation and support for individuals or families, health promotion and illness prevention and community development.

Primary health care aims to:

- build self reliance at a personal and community level;
- include consumers and their supporting family members/carers in the delivery, planning and evaluation of health and aged care services;
- adopt a co-operative approach by a range of health and related agencies (for example, housing, transport, welfare and local government agencies);
- integrate services across the lifespan to facilitate continuity of care and efficiency of resource consumption;
- work proactively with marginalised, vulnerable and high risk groups; and
- use technology appropriately.

It is the position of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation that:

1. Nurses and midwives are encouraged to develop both an understanding of the philosophy of primary health care and a commitment to its values and goals.
2. Participation of nurses and midwives in the provision of primary health care is essential to achieving improved population health outcomes and better access to primary health care services for communities.



3. Nurses' and midwives' roles in primary health care should be broadened to work with communities to focus on the prevention of illness and health promotion. This will lead to improved health outcomes and management of chronic disease, and reduce demand on the acute hospital sector.
4. National funding policies should support models of care that enable nurses and midwives to work to their full scope of practice in the primary health care sector.

*endorsed September 1994*

*reviewed and re-endorsed November 1996*

*reviewed and re-endorsed February 2006*

*reviewed and re-endorsed May 2009*

*reviewed and re-endorsed May 2012*

*reviewed and re-endorsed May 2015*

#### References

1. The Declaration of Alma-Ata can be found on the following website, [http://www.euro.who.int/AboutWHO/Policy/20010827\\_1](http://www.euro.who.int/AboutWHO/Policy/20010827_1)

**Note:** this position statement should be read in conjunction with:

Australian Nursing Federation. 2009. *Primary Health Care in Australia: A nursing and midwifery consensus view*. Available at: [http://www.anf.org.au/html/publications\\_reports.html](http://www.anf.org.au/html/publications_reports.html)