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Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

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Submission on National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards (3rd ed)

Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards (3rd Edition). As health library professionals, we strongly advocate for the formal recognition and inclusion of health libraries within the Standards. Health libraries are essential infrastructure that underpin safe, high-quality, evidence-based healthcare.

Why Health Libraries Matter

Health libraries provide clinicians, managers, and policy makers with access to current, authoritative, and evidence-based information. This supports informed decision-making, continuous improvement, and compliance with clinical governance frameworks. Health librarians also play a vital role in building workforce capability through training in information literacy, critical appraisal, and research skills.

Alignment with NSQHS Standards

Health libraries directly support the implementation of the NSQHS Standards. Below are some suggestions of how the Standards could be strengthened with minor wording updates.

Standard 1: Clinical Governance

Health libraries provide access to policies, procedures, and clinical guidelines, supporting governance systems and risk management. One of the key tasks listed to support clinicians to use the best available evidence is *“Making resources available to implement clinical guidelines, pathways or clinical care standards”*. We feel that the wording can be updated to reflect this more accurately to ensure organisations have the correct resources (information and staffing) in order to deliver on this Action.

Recommendation: Action 1.27

The health service organisation has processes that:

- Provide clinicians with ready access to best-practice guidelines, integrated care pathways, clinical pathways and decision support tools, **including, through partnership with a health library for ready access to evidence-based information, literature searches and resources, supported by ongoing education in the use of resources**, relevant to their clinical practice.
- ~~Support clinicians to use the best available evidence,~~ **Ensure accessibility of professional health librarians to deliver expert support and training, empowering clinicians to confidently locate, evaluate, and apply the best available evidence in their decision-making** including relevant [clinical care standards](#) developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers

Health libraries contribute to consumer health literacy initiatives and provide resources for patient education, empowering informed choices. One of the key tasks listed includes “*internally developed consumer information*”. This can be strengthened in organisations by having information professionals like librarians involved in their development. Wording has been updated below to reflect this.

Recommendation: Action 2.09

Where information for patients, carers, families and consumers about health and health services is developed internally, the organisation involves consumers and, **where available, health librarians** in its development and review.

Standard 4: Medication Safety

Health libraries provide clinicians and pharmacists with timely access to authoritative drug resources and medicines information, supporting safe prescribing, administration, and monitoring practices. A listed key task is that “*a variety of up-to-date and evidence-based medicine-related information and decision-support tools*” is maintained. In order to fulfil this Action qualified librarians are needed. Wording below has been updated to more accurately reflect this.

Recommendation: Action 4.13

The health service organisation ensures that information and decision support tools for medicines, **including subscribed databases, clinical apps, drug indexes and reference materials maintained by the health library**, are available to clinicians **along with support and advice on use of these resources.**



We recommend that the Commission:

- **Explicitly acknowledge health libraries** as contributors to clinical governance and evidence-based care within the NSQHS Standards.
- **Encourage health services to maintain access to qualified health librarians** and library services as part of their quality and safety infrastructure.
- **Include health libraries in accreditation guidance** to ensure their role is recognised and supported across the sector.

Conclusion

In support of health services seeking to meet NSQHS accreditation requirements, ALIA Health Libraries Australia has developed tailored resources to assist libraries in aligning with the Standards. These include:

- A dedicated page outlining how health libraries contribute to each NSQHS Standard: <https://hla.alia.org.au/nsqhs-standards/>
- A collection of practical examples and templates that libraries can use to demonstrate their role in accreditation processes: <https://hla.alia.org.au/nsqhs-standards-examples-templates/>

These resources provide a clear framework for integrating library services into clinical governance, safety, and quality systems, and further reinforce the case for their formal inclusion in the NSQHS Standards.

Health libraries are not ancillary services—they are foundational to safe, informed, and high-quality healthcare. They provide trustworthy, authoritative and responsible source of access to evidence-based information which is fundamental to clinical decision making and evidence-based policies and protocols. Their inclusion in the new edition of the NSQHS Standards will strengthen the sector's commitment to evidence-based practice and continuous improvement.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely



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On behalf of ALIA Health Libraries Australia Sector Committee

