



Submission to the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

Regarding: Explicit Recognition of Health Libraries in the NSQHS Standards (3rd Edition)

Submitted by: Health Libraries Australia (HLA) a sector committee of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) via email
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Introduction

Health Libraries Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft NSQHS Standards 3rd edition. We commend the Commission's commitment to strengthening clinical governance, evidence-informed practice, and organisational learning. However, we respectfully submit that the explicit recognition of hospital library services as essential infrastructure would significantly strengthen the Standards' capacity to deliver on these objectives and better support high-quality care across all health services.

Strengthening Evidence-Informed Care and Clinical Governance

The draft Standards emphasise evidence-informed practice as central to clinical governance and safe clinical systems. However, without explicit recognition of the infrastructure and expertise required to access, appraise and translate evidence into practice, this aspiration cannot be fully realised.

Health libraries are foundational to evidence-informed care.

Librarians:

- Conduct systematic and scoping reviews that directly inform changes in clinical practice and the development of hospital guidelines, policies and procedures.
- Provide curated access to clinical resources, peer-reviewed journals, evidence-based databases and clinical decision support tools.
- Support clinical education and research literacy across the workforce.
- Contribute to and support college accreditation and professional development.

The Commission has already recognised this contribution in the *Good Institutional Practice Guide*, which explicitly acknowledges the role of health librarians in conducting, supporting and providing oversight of research in health settings.

Recommended action: Strengthen Requirement 1.21 (Evidence-informed guidance and resources p. 15) to explicitly include hospital library and knowledge services:

"a. provide clinicians with access to Clinical Care Standards, evidence-informed guidelines, care pathways, decision support tools and hospital library and knowledge services that support evidence retrieval, appraisal and translation into practice."

Supporting Clinical Research and Governance

The inclusion of clinical research within the scope of the 3rd edition is welcome and timely. Health librarians are well-established contributors to research governance and are frequently members of Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs). They provide essential support in ensuring research integrity, ethical oversight and compliance with national standards.

Recommended action: Strengthen Requirement 1.08 (Clinical Research Activities p.6) to include:

"e. support access to library and research services that assist clinicians in identifying, conducting, translating, publishing and applying clinical research."

Reducing Compliance Burden and Improving Accessibility

A significant challenge for many Australian health services - particularly smaller and regional facilities - is that **not all hospitals have access to a dedicated library or health librarian**. This creates inequitable access to evidence and information resources, directly impacting the quality and safety of care.

To address this, Health Libraries Australia has developed a suite of live literature searches to support all health services in meeting NSQHS accreditation requirements:

- **Live literature searches:** Pre-prepared, regularly updated searches on priority topics (delirium, infection prevention, wound management, malnutrition, deteriorating patient, falls prevention and more), freely accessible via the NSQHS website.

These are designed to reduce **compliance burden** by providing ready-made evidence infrastructure and to **improve accessibility** by ensuring all health services - regardless of size or location - can access high-quality evidence resources.

Addressing Evolving Models of Care, Inequities and Digital Transformation

The rationale for change to the 3rd edition appropriately recognises the need to address evolving models of care, health inequities and rapidly evolving technologies. Health librarians are uniquely positioned to support health services in these areas:

- **Information governance and digital literacy:** Librarians guide the ethical use of artificial intelligence, support education on misinformation and disinformation, and ensure sound information management practices across the workforce.
- **Equitable access to evidence:** By providing curated, accessible evidence resources, librarians help address inequities in access to information that underpin clinical decision-making.
- **Organisational learning:** Librarians support continuous improvement by ensuring the latest evidence is readily available and integrated into clinical practice.

Without information governance supported by health librarians as a profession, we respectfully submit that clinical governance based on high-quality evidence would not be possible, and patient experience and outcomes would be at risk.

Conclusion

Health libraries are not ancillary services—they are foundational infrastructure supporting safe, informed and high-quality healthcare. Explicit recognition of health libraries within the NSQHS Standards 3rd edition would:

- **Strengthen evidence-informed care** by ensuring all health services have access to the expertise and resources required to access and apply evidence.
- **Support clinical governance** by embedding information management and research support into organisational systems.
- **Reduce compliance burden** by providing accessible, ready-made evidence infrastructure.
- **Advance health equity** by ensuring all Australians have access to high-quality evidence, regardless of their location or the size of their health service.
- **Support organisational learning** by enabling continuous improvement through access to the latest evidence and research.

Health Libraries Australia respectfully urges the Commission to explicitly recognise hospital library services within **Requirements 1.21 and 1.08 of the draft Standards**. This recognition would strengthen the sector's commitment to evidence-informed practice, clinical governance and continuous improvement, and would better support the delivery of safe, high-quality care across all Australian health services.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission further and to support the Commission in strengthening the 3rd edition of the NSQHS Standards.

Yours sincerely,



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