

## Clinical Nurse Specialist Classification - Public Hospital Nurses (State) Award

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**Functional Sub group** Personnel/Workforce - Conditions of employment

**Summary** Conditions for creation of Clinical Nurse Specialist position.

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**Applies to** Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Non Declared, NSW Dept of Health, Public Hospitals

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### Director-General

This Policy Directive may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is **mandatory** for NSW Health and is a condition of subsidy for public health organisations.

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**PUBLIC HOSPITAL NURSES (STATE) AWARD**  
**CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST CLASSIFICATION**

The 1986 Award decision created the new classification of Clinical Nurse Specialist. The definition, criteria and guidelines in relation to that classification are well documented, particularly in Department of Health Circular 87/32 dated 30th January 1987.

Since the issue of Circular 87/32, hospitals and health authorities have been required to apply the classification of Clinical Nurse Specialist as determined. The classification is somewhat unique in industrial terms in that it is a classification "personal" to the employee concerned rather than an appointed position. That "personal" factor has the result of providing for a variability in the proportion of registered nurses classified as Clinical Nurse Specialist.

The original approval given by the Department in early 1987 in relation to the classification of Clinical Nurse Specialist was intended as a "one off" approval decision by the Department after which time it was intended that hospitals and health services would continue to apply the classification in accordance with the definition, criteria and locally developed guidelines. In this regard reference is made particularly to the following extract from Circular 87/32:

"Hospitals will have the ultimate responsibility for approving persons to be appointed as Clinical Nurse Specialists based on the recommendation of the Director of Nursing."

The N.S.W. Nurses' Association has stated that it does not wish to see any interference or alteration with the definition and accompanying criteria of the classification as it presently stands. Department of Health Circular 87/32 stated at page 6:

"During the inspections undertaken by the Department and the Association it was noted that the Hospitals and units inspected had a variety of percentages of staff selected for Clinical Nurse Specialist status. It was generally observed that, in most hospitals and health service facilities the number of Clinical Nurse Specialists was in the vicinity of twenty to twenty-five per cent of registered nursing staff employed. The Department acknowledges that some hospitals or wards or units of a hospital or health unit may well have a higher percentage of Clinical Nurse Specialists. Conversely there will be some hospitals and/or health units that will not have Clinical Nurse Specialists because Nursing Administrators are unable to identify any nurses eligible to be classified as such in the light of the definition and criteria set out above."

A subsequent survey conducted by the Department in December 1987 indicated that the percentage range of Clinical Nurse Specialists has, with very few exceptions, remained within that range.

However, since the original approvals were given with subsequent funding, it was necessary for the Department and the Association to process further applications, the last of which were finalised in March 1989. At the completion of this exercise, all outstanding applications for Clinical Nurse Specialist approvals and subsequent funding have been dealt with. These additional approvals have now been authorised by the Department, and letters of authority sent to Regional Offices/Area Health Services.

#### Ongoing management

For the purposes of facilitating the ongoing application of the classification of Clinical Nurse Specialist, the Department has considered the current situation and advises hospitals, Area Health Services and/Regions as follows:

1. The classification of Clinical Nurse Specialist in the Public Hospital Nurses (State) Award will continue to be applied as advised in Circular 87/32. In this regard the Department emphasises that the ultimate responsibility for approving registered nurses to be classified as Clinical Nurse Specialist is a local decision based on the recommendation of the Director of Nursing.
2. The proportion of Clinical Nurse Specialists has, over the time that the classification has existed, revealed to be generally self-determining, within the original parameters.
3. Previous approvals by the Department are to be funded to Area Health Services and Regional Offices on a current and annual basis .

4. It is suggested that in Area Health Services the allocation of Clinical Nurse Specialists may be done on an area-wide basis given the differences which may currently exist between the hospitals in a particular Area Health Service.

Should an Area Health Service believe that redistribution of the Clinical Nurse Specialist allocation is necessary within the Area, it is suggested that consultation should occur between the Area Director - Nursing Services and hospital Directors of Nursing and community nursing management representatives. Further, that such consultation should involve local Nurses' Association Branches.

5. Any hospital or Area Health Service may appoint further Clinical Nurse Specialists in accordance with the principles of Circular No. 87/32 issued on 30th January 1987, on the basis that the funding for such appointments be met within recurrent financial allocations..

Michael Rosser  
Secretary.