

## **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) = Continuing professional results (CPR) for nurses**

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Life long learning is defined (Kearns 1999) as including learning in all forms and contexts. For nurses, this learning is a career long and career wide commitment to ensure currency of practice and competence in providing care. RCNA has always recognised the importance of maintaining competency to ensure patient safety and excellence in practice. We advise our members that they need to undertake a minimum of 30 hours continuing professional development (CPD) annually. Furthermore, we have developed an online Life Long Learning Program (3LP) to assist in undertaking and recording CPD.

Recent developments in Australia’s regulatory system for nursing have resulted in the formation of a single national registration and registration system and mandated a requirement for CPD, together with an auditing process as a requisite for re-registration.

The challenge for us, as the peak professional nursing organisation in Australia, is how to support all our member nurses in identifying and achieving the mandatory CPD requirement. This cannot be achieved through a “one size fits all” approach; members have diverse specialisations, responsibilities and interests, work in metropolitan, rural and remote settings, have varying learning needs and demonstrate a wide range of computer literacy. Most significantly, they have a range of understandings of what is covered by the term CPD.

Our response has been to ensure that our members recognise what constitutes CPD and to tailor our 3LP program to encompass this variety.

Nurses are familiar with formal CPD programs and can readily identify our 3LP program as a means of accessing such learning. They are less conscious of CPD in the life long learning context – and yet, every day, in many ways, nurses take part in informal learning and do not recognise this as being self-directed CPD.

3LP is designed to assist nurses to meet CPD performance requirements. The principle used is one of scaffolding, where the program provides assistance with planning, organising, doing and reflecting on CPD activities. The program includes a planning template to capture both formal and self directed CPD activities, a CPD points log, portfolio building and résumé preparation.

3LP users can also choose how connected they want to be when undertaking CPD: the site offers networking opportunities and utilises modern technology to accommodate members who want to bring their social networking skills and learning preferences into the professional arena.