Queensland Health

# Comparison - General approval (Acute health conditions at isolated sites) and General approval (Emergency first aid)

Medicines and Poisons Act 2019 – Fact sheet - July 2026

## Background and overview

General approvals are a type of 'substance authority'[1] and are defined in section 68 of the *Medicines and Poisons Act 2019* (Qld) (**MPA**) as *an approval that authorises a person to carry out a regulated activity with a regulated substances stated in the approval.* In addition, the Medicines and Poisons (Medicines) Regulation 2021 (Qld) (**MPMR**) may prescribe different classes of general approvals for carrying out different types of regulated activities.

As with other types of substance authorities, an application must be made for all general approvals, including those prescribed under the MPMR.

Schedule 16 of the MPMR, prescribes three classes of *general approvals* associated with an entity who employs particular persons who deal with medicines at certain sites and in specified circumstances.

The three prescribed classes of general approvals are:

- **General approval (acute health conditions at isolated sites)** which authorises persons to carry out dealings with medicines for the purpose of treating acute health conditions.
- **General approval (emergency first aid)** which authorises persons to carry out dealings with medicines for the purpose of providing first aid in an emergency; and
- **General approval (emergency management of animals)** which authorises persons to carry out dealings with medicines for the purposes of providing emergency care and treatment of sick, injured or orphaned animals.

Each class of general approval has its own distinct purpose.

This factsheet focuses on the difference between the **general approval (acute health conditions at isolated sites)** and the **general approval (emergency first aid)** to assist applicants to understand which class of general approval might apply to their circumstances.

## Key definitions under MPA and MPMR

It is important to understand the terms used under the MPA and MPMR when considering each approval type. Some relevant definitions include:

- ***administer*** a medicine means introduce a dose of the medicine into the body of a person or animal by any means or give a dose of the medicine to a person to be taken immediately.
- ***first aid provider*** means a person who has a current certificate granted by a registered training organisation for the provision of first aid.

[1] See section 61 of the MPA.

- ***give a treatment dose*** of a medicine means give one or more doses of the medicine to a person to be taken by a particular person, or administered to an animal, at a later time.
- ***paramedic*** means a person registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as being qualified to practise as a paramedic.
- ***possess*** means to have custody or control of the medicine. Medicines may be possessed jointly by authorised persons.
- ***registered nurse*** means a person who is registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law to practise in the registered nurses division of the nursing profession.
- ***senior person***, in relation to a general approval (emergency first aid), means a person who is responsible for daily operations at a site stated in the approval.
- ***standing order*** for a medicine means a document authorising the medicine to be administered or given as a treatment dose at a stated place or in stated circumstances.

# Difference between approval types

The table below provides detailed descriptions of what each of the general approval (acute health conditions at isolated sites) and general approval (emergency first aid) authorise.

In some circumstances, such as mine sites, an entity may require both types of approval to meet their needs.

**Table 1:** Authority under each approval type

| | General Approval (Acute Health Conditions at Isolated Sites) | General Approval (Emergency First Aid) |
|---|---|---|
| **Purpose of each approval type** | | |
| | Authorises persons to carry out dealings with medicines for the purpose of treating acute health conditions at isolated sites. | Authorises persons to carry out dealings with medicines for the purpose of providing first aid in an emergency. |
| **Sites that apply to the approval type** | | |
| | Limited to 'isolated site' only.<br>***isolated site*** means a remote site for which limited medical and pharmaceutical services are available. Examples— mine sites and island resorts<br>**Note:** When making an application for a general approval, the entity must provide evidence supporting how an intended site meets this definition. This may include details regarding the distance from the site to medical and pharmaceutical services.<br>The isolated sites will be listed in the approval if granted. | A place at which an event, notified to the chief executive by the holder of the approval under section 35, takes place, or a place stated in the approval. |
| **Authorised persons and dealings with medicines under the approval type** | | |
| **Medical Practitioner (MP)** | Must be employed by the holder of an approval. | Must be working for the holder of an approval. |

| | General Approval (Acute Health Conditions at Isolated Sites) | General Approval (Emergency First Aid) |
|---|---|---|
| | Authorised to give a purchase order for stock of medicines for an isolated site stated in the approval. | Authorised to give a purchase order for stock of medicines for a site stated in the approval. |
| **Nurse Practitioner (NP)** | Must be employed by the holder of an approval.<br>Authorised to give a purchase order for stock of medicines for an isolated site stated in the approval. | Must be working for the holder of an approval.<br>Authorised to give a purchase order for stock of medicines for a site stated in the approval. |
| **Registered Nurse (RN)** | Must be employed by the holder of an approval.<br>Authorised to:<br>(a) possess stock of medicines for an isolated site stated in the approval; and<br>(b) ***give a treatment dose*** of an S2, S3 or S4 medicine stated in the approval on a prescription from a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner. | Must be working at a site for an approval.<br>Authorised to:<br>(a) possess an emergency medicine under the approval; and<br>(b) ***administer*** an emergency medicine on an oral prescription or a ***standing order*** made under the approval; and |
| | **Note:** an RN providing a supply of medicines to the patient to be taken at a later time (giving a treatment dose) is different to a medicine being 'administered' by the RN.<br>RNs cannot give a treatment dose to a person on a standing order under either approval. | |
| **Paramedic** | No authority given additional to that which is already held by a paramedic employed by Queensland Ambulance Service (see below – *interactions with existing authorities*). | Must be working at a site for an approval.<br>Authorised to:<br>(a) possess an emergency medicine under the approval; and<br>(b) ***administer*** an emergency medicine on an oral prescription or ***standing order*** made under the approval; and<br>(c) dispose of waste from an emergency medicine that is a diversion-risk medicine under the approval. |
| **First aid provider** | No authority given additional to that which is already held by a first aid provider (see below – *interactions with existing authorities*). | Must be working at a site for an approval.<br>Authorised to:<br>(a) administer glyceryl trinitrate on a prescription from an MP or NP made under the approval; and<br>(b) possess glyceryl trinitrate under the approval. |
| **Senior person at a site in the approval** | Must be employed by the holder of the approval.<br>Authorised to possess stock of medicines for the isolated site. | Must working for the holder of the approval.<br>Authorised to possess stock of medicines for the site. |
| **Medicines allowed under the approval type** | | |
| | The medicines that will be listed in this approval type are:<br>• Schedule 2 – Medicines | Schedule 16, Part 2 of the MPMR lists the medicines that are permitted under a general approval (emergency first aid): |

| | General Approval (Acute Health Conditions at Isolated Sites) | General Approval (Emergency First Aid) |
|---|---|---|
| | • Schedule 3 – Medicines<br>• Schedule 4 – Antibiotics/antifungals/antivirals – only oral formulations, eye/ear drops or ointments<br>• Schedule 4 – Benzodiazepines – 3 days' supply only; oral formulations only<br>• Schedule 4 – Steroids – dermal and topical rectal only<br>• Schedule 4 – Antiemetics/antispasmodics – oral formulations only | ***emergency medicine***, in relation to a general approval (emergency first aid), means—<br>(a) each of the following medicines—<br>• adrenaline (epinephrine);<br>• atropine;<br>• benzatropine;<br>• ceftriaxone;<br>• furosemide (frusemide);<br>• glucagon;<br>• glyceryl trinitrate;<br>• hydrocortisone;<br>• ipratropium bromide monohydrate;<br>• lidocaine (lignocaine);<br>• methoxyflurane;<br>• metoclopramide;<br>• midazolam;<br>• morphine;<br>• naloxone;<br>• nitrous oxide;<br>• promethazine;<br>• salbutamol;<br>(b) another medicine for emergencies stated in the approval. |
| **Standing orders under the approval type** | | |
| | Standing orders cannot be used for giving a treatment dose to patients by RNs under this approval type.<br>Medicines in the approval can only be given as a treatment dose by an RN to a patient at the approval site on a prescription (oral or written) from an MP or NP. | Standing orders may be used by RNs and paramedics under this approval type.<br>Section 107 of the MPMR requires standing orders for this approval type to state that a person must attempt to contact the prescriber or another person authorised to prescribe the medicine before administering.<br>The standing order must also state that this requirement does not apply in relation to:<br>(a) administration in urgent situations requiring immediate treatment of a patient or an animal; or<br>(b) administration of one of the following medicines:<br>(i) adrenaline (epinephrine);<br>(ii) glyceryl trinitrate;<br>(iii) glucagon;<br>(iv) naloxone;<br>(v) nitrous oxide;<br>(vi) methoxyflurane;<br>(vii) salbutamol.<br>A standing order fact sheet and template specific to this type of approval can be found at:<br>• Fact sheet - General Approval (Emergency First Aid) - Standing Orders<br>• Emergency First Aid - Standing Order Template |

# Interaction with existing authorities

A general approval (acute health conditions at isolated sites) and general approval (emergency first aid) extends the authority that MPs, NPs, RNs, paramedics and first aid providers employed by or working for the holder of the approval outlined above may already have under the MPMR.

Under these approvals, an MP, authorised under Schedule 6, Part 1 of the MPMR, and an NP, authorised under Schedule 7, Part 1 of the MPMR, may 'give a purchase order' in some circumstances that are otherwise not permitted. For example, if the site in the approval is a mine or other specified place.

The authority for RNs and paramedics are specific to the approval type.

## General approval (acute health conditions at isolated sites)

An RN's authority under Schedule 7, Part 3 of the MPMR includes administering medicines (S2 and S3 on their own professional decision, and S4 and S8 on the prescription of a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner) or to give a treatment dose in accordance with the conditions specified under the Extended Practice Authority for Registered Nurses (**RNEPA**). The RNEPA is available at: Extended Practice Authority - Registered Nurses.

Where an RN is working for an entity under a general approval (acute health conditions at isolated sites), their authority to give a treatment dose is extended to giving a treatment dose of an S2, S3 or S4 medicine stated in the approval on a prescription from an MP or NP.

If an RN is giving a treatment dose under the RNEPA, then that is outside the authority provided under this approval type.

A key element of the **general approval (acute health conditions at isolated sites)** is the authority for registered nurses employed by the entity to 'give a treatment dose' of the medicines listed in the approval.

In all circumstances where a treatment dose is given under the MPMR, then the medicine supplied will need to be labelled and a record kept in compliance with the requirements in the legislation (MPMR).

## General approval (emergency first aid)

Schedule 5, Part 1 of the MPMR authorises registered ***paramedics*** to deal with certain medicines when they are employed and undertaking paramedic functions for the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS). However, outside of the QAS, a registered paramedic has no 'authority' under the MPMR to deal with medicines, unless authorised under a General Approval (Emergency First Aid).

This approval type authorises registered paramedics working at a site for an approval to administer an ***emergency medicine*** (the medicines listed in Schedule 16, Part 2 of the MPMR, or any additional medicines listed in the approval) on an oral prescription or standing order.

This means an MP or NP can give an oral prescription for a paramedic to administer an emergency medicine under the approval, or an emergency medicine can be administered by a paramedic under a ***standing order*** (not a clinical practice guideline).

Paramedics cannot administer any other scheduled medicines, even if a prescription is provided by an MP or NP.

Schedule 5, Part 2 of the MPMR authorises ***first aid providers*** to deal with certain medicines. This approval extends the authority of a first aid provider to possess and administer glyceryl trinitrate on the prescription of an MP or NP.

The existing authority for ***RNs*** under Schedule 7, Part 1 of the MPMR permits them to administer S4 and S8 medicines on the prescription of an MP or NP. Where an RN is working at a site for this approval type, their authority is extended to administer the S4 medicines listed in s107(3)(b) of the MPMR under a standing order, rather than just on a prescription. They can also administer an emergency medicine on a standing order in urgent situations requiring immediate treatment of a patient as per s107(3)(a) of the MPMR.

A key element of the **general approval (emergency first aid)** is the authority for RNs and paramedics working at a site for an approval to administer an emergency medicine on a standing order or oral prescription.

# Other information

The holder of the General Approval (Emergency First Aid) and/or the General Approval (Acute Health Conditions at Isolated Sites) must appoint an appropriately qualified MP or NP to oversee the dealings authorised under the approval. Sections 32 to 36 of the MPMR refer.

An entity may apply for both approval types depending on their circumstances, noting that the general approval (acute health conditions at isolated sites) is limited to an isolated site.

More information for each approval type and how to apply can be found at:

- General approvals | Queensland Health
- General approval (acute health conditions at isolated sites) factsheet
- General approval (emergency first aid) factsheet
- General approval (emergency management of animals) factsheet

# Further information

For further information contact the Medicines Approvals and Regulation Unit (MARU): MARU@health.qld.gov.au.