



Conscientious objection

It is the policy of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation that:

1. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing (however titled) have a right to refuse to participate in procedures which they judge, on strongly held religious, moral and ethical beliefs, to be unacceptable (conscientious objection) ^{1 2}. Fear, personal convenience or preference, are not sufficient basis for conscientious objection.
2. In exercising their conscientious objection, nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing must take all reasonable steps to ensure that quality of care, patient safety, and advance care directives are not compromised.
3. Subject to their scope of practice, nurses and midwives in the course of their employment, must not refuse to carry out urgent procedures which are life-saving measures.
4. In situations of conscientious objection, the nurse, midwife or assistants in nursing should express a desire not to participate in that procedure, in advance if possible. The employer must allow the nurse, midwife or assistants in nursing to leave the area or not participate in the procedure as soon as practicable without any discriminatory or adverse action being taken.
5. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing should give serious consideration to avoiding employment positions where they can foresee that a situation of conscientious objection may arise.
6. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing accepting employment positions where they know they may be called on to be involved in situations at variance with their beliefs, have a responsibility to acquaint their employer with this fact.
7. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing should support colleagues who exercise their right to conscientious objection, and endeavour to prevent them being placed in situations that may compromise their religious, moral and ethical beliefs.
8. No discriminatory or adverse action should be taken against any nurse, midwife or assistants in nursing professing a conscientious objection either in an application for, or during employment.
9. Health and aged care facilities should provide or assist with access to a counselling service to meet the needs of their nursing and midwifery staff.

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reviewed and re-endorsed November 1996

reviewed and re-endorsed November 2004

reviewed and re-endorsed December 2007

reviewed and re-endorsed June 2011

reviewed and re-endorsed February 2015

Reference

1. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council; Royal College of Nursing Australia; Australian Nursing Federation (2008). Value statement 1: Nurses value quality nursing care for all people, no 1 - Self. In *Code of ethics for nurses in Australia*, p. 6. Canberra: ANMC, RCN, ANF.
2. Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council; Royal College of Nursing Australia; Australian Nursing Federation (2008). Value statement 1: Midwives value quality midwifery care for each woman and her infant(s), no 1 - Self. In *Code of ethics for midwives in Australia*, p. 7. Canberra: ANMC, RCN, ANF.