

Policy on **Occupational Health and Safety**

Re-endorsed by Annual Conference 2008

The NSW Nurses' Association recognises that:

- Nurses work in the health, residential aged care, community and other industries.
- Nurses are exposed to a wide range of occupational health and safety hazards in their workplaces, regardless of where they work.
- Prevention of injury and disease is the first priority for occupational health and safety.
- Nurses and midwives have occupational health and safety rights that are supported by the provisions of NSW legislation and associated regulations.
- The purpose of the NSW legislation is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all persons at work. The legislation aims to prevent work related injury and illness. It places legislative obligations on the employer and other parties.

The NSW Nurses' Association adopts the policy that:

1. Nurses and midwives have the right to work in a safe and healthy workplace to perform their work without risks to their physical and mental health and safety, and to have adequate provisions made for their welfare.
2. Nurses and midwives have the right to expect that employers will:
 - 2.1 develop and implement policies and programs to manage occupational risks including systems for the identification of hazards, the assessment and control of risks, reporting hazards and incidents, design of premises and purchase of equipment and substances
 - 2.2 demonstrate their commitment by incorporating occupational health and safety into all aspects of organisational planning and management, and provide adequate resourcing to ensure health and safety requirements are met.
 - 2.3 comply with legislation and be informed by relevant guidance material,
 - 2.4 establish effective mechanisms for consultation with employees on OHS and welfare matters including OHS committees and OHS representatives; and the nurses performing the work when identifying and assessing risks and developing control strategies
 - 2.5 inform them of what hazards they are exposed to at work,
 - 2.6 inform them of the associated risks and the measures required to protect their health and safety,
 - 2.7 provide them with safe plant and substances and facilitate the safe use, handling, storage and transport of plant and substances,



- 2.8 provide adequate information, instruction, education, training, equipment, staffing levels and supervision so that they can perform their work safely,
 - 2.9 provide them with well designed workplaces, work environments, fixtures and furniture, equipment, systems of work and work practices that do not create, contribute to or exacerbate workplace risks, and
 - 2.10 continuously evaluate risk management programs and control strategies for their effectiveness and make the necessary improvements.
3. Nurses and midwives have the right to expect that the most effective hazard control measures will be implemented by the employer and that hazards will be eliminated or minimised at their source.
 4. Nurses and midwives who are affected by occupational injury and/or disease must have access to:
 - 4.1 workplace-based rehabilitation and injury management,
 - 4.2 retraining when they cannot return to their previous work,
 - 4.3 appropriate health care and injury management services,
 - 4.4 comprehensive no-fault financial compensation and common law entitlements.
 5. Nurses and midwives who are exposed to occupational health and safety risks have the right to a personal health examination at the employer's expense and the right of access to their own health records.
 6. Nurses and midwives have the right to expect that they will not be dismissed, have their employment altered, or be harassed for making an occupational health and safety complaint or for taking part in occupational health and safety activities.
 7. Nurses and midwives must not be charged the cost of or be otherwise financially disadvantaged by the employer for equipment, immunisations, training or any other risk control measure provided to protect their health and safety.
 8. Manual Handling: Nurses and midwives have the right to work within a workplace where the workplace design and layout, systems of work, furniture and fixtures and work practices are conducive to safe manual handling; to be provided with appropriate manual handling equipment and aids; to be provided with adequate staffing resources to facilitate safe manual handling; and to be provided with training in manual handling risks and safe work practices. The NSW Nurses' Association supports manual handling risk management programs that aim to eliminate manual lifting *and transferring of patients* by nurses and midwives.
 9. Aggression: Nurses and midwives have the right to perform their work without risk of aggression; be provided with specialised training to assist them to effectively prevent and manage aggressive incidents; work in a secure workplace with appropriate security systems (including perimeter security, car parking and duress alarms); and be provided



with support if they are adversely affected by aggression or wish to have a perpetrator of aggression charged.

10. Critical Incidents: Nurses and midwives have the right to be provided with adequate support following critical incidents including timely provision of treatment, defusing, personal support and counselling as needed.
11. Blood borne and other infectious diseases: Nurses and midwives have the right to be protected from blood and body substances exposure. This includes being supplied with safe systems of work; information on current and emerging biological issues; effective personal protective equipment; and with sharps products that are of safe design. They also have the right to be offered vaccination, at no cost to them, against infectious diseases to which they may be exposed (where vaccines are available).
12. Hazardous substances: Nurses and midwives have the right to be protected from hazardous substances such as latex, glutaraldehyde and cytotoxic drugs; expect that adequate information will be provided about substances to which they may be exposed, and expect that effective risk control measures will be employed.
13. Shiftwork: Nurses and midwives have the right to work shiftwork patterns which are not adverse to their health, safety and well-being and which provide for adequate rest between shifts.
14. Nurses and midwives will take reasonable care of the health and safety of other persons (employees and others) who may be affected by their actions or omissions.
15. Nurses and midwives will cooperate with the employer's efforts to fulfil their duties under occupational health and safety legislation. This includes complying with safe work practices and using equipment in accordance with their training and manufacturers' instructions, and attending occupational health and safety training where possible.
16. Nurses and midwives will report to management any work related injury, illness or workplace hazard including the inability to comply with safe work practices without fear of discrimination or reprisals as soon as practicable.
17. Nurses and midwives should participate in workplace occupational health and safety consultation opportunities such as occupational health and safety committees, occupational health and safety representatives and direct consultation with employees. In workplaces where occupational health and safety committees and representatives do not exist, nurses and midwives should request that the employer establish formal arrangements for consultation.
18. The NSW Nurses' Association will continue to:
 - 18.1 pursue occupational health and safety issues relevant to nurses and midwives at local, state and federal levels,
 - 18.2 provide nurses and midwives with occupational health and safety information and advice,



- 18.3 support members who are being exposed to occupational health and safety risks
19. The NSW Nurses' Association will intervene in occupational health and safety matters on behalf of members and will negotiate improvements with the employer where workplace arrangements for resolution of OHS problems have not resulted in an acceptable outcome. Nurses and midwives also have the right to request an inspection by WorkCover NSW where an occupational health and safety issue has not been resolved through available workplace structures.

