



## Health and the environment

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) recognise and acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the traditional custodians, have cared for the land and environment for thousands of years before and hundreds of years since settlement. The land is a link between all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's existence; this includes spirituality, health, culture, language, family, lore and identity. Indigenous land and sea management, also referred to as 'caring for country', includes a wide range of environmental, natural resource and cultural heritage management activities<sup>1</sup>.

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

1. Individual and population wellbeing is inextricably linked with the health of the environment. A healthy environment not only leads to improved health for the population but it also encourages people to make choices for better health.<sup>2</sup>
2. Public policy underpins the promotion and maintenance of health at both individual and population levels.
3. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation supports:
  - a) the Global Green and Health Hospitals agenda which provides a framework for environmental health and wellbeing.
  - b) the development of a health, aged care and disability service sector which focuses on health promotion and restoration, preventive health strategies, and the involvement of communities in decision making;
  - c) national standardisation of environmental impact assessments;
  - d) environmental impact assessment criteria being included in accreditation processes;
  - e) the inclusion of climate change, environmental issues and environmentally sustainable practice in nursing and midwifery education;
  - f) collaboration between nurses, midwives and medical industry manufacturers to eliminate superfluous packaging and products;
  - g) circular economy principles and reduce, reuse and recycle opportunities where practicable;
  - h) nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing\* advocating for healthy environments;
  - i) sustainable procurement strategies that consider life cycle and environmental impact studies, and incorporate best practice environmental and social criteria in the purchasing process;
  - j) national standards for practice and codes of ethics for nurses and midwives that include the importance of responding to the environmental impact of healthcare delivery as a safety and quality measure;
  - k) actions and initiatives that will address the challenges of climate change; and
  - l) net zero emissions by 2050.

\*The term assistant in nursing also refers to care workers (however titled)



4. All health, aged care, disability and other facilities where health services are provided (for example schools) should identify and implement activities to mitigate the environmental impact of their service delivery.
5. All health, aged care, disability and other facilities where health services are provided, should establish a mechanism that, in collaboration with stakeholders and other appropriate personnel:
  - a) advises on policies and protocols in relation to environmental issues;
  - b) undertakes environmental impact assessments;
  - c) provides advice on new and existing products;
  - d) Incorporates sustainability into capital works projects; and
  - e) seeks to operate in the most resource efficient and environmentally compatible manner.
6. In order to ensure best practice and, in some instances, compliance with relevant legislation, all health, aged care, and other facilities where health services are provided, should carry out annual environmental audits to assess their:
  - a) energy use and conservation opportunities;
  - b) water use and conservation opportunities;
  - c) opportunity to reduce resource consumption and wastage;
  - d) pollution of soil, air and waterways;
  - e) waste generation, segregation and conservation opportunities such as reuse, reduce and recycle;
  - f) product use and sustainable procurement options; and
  - g) emissions profile.
7. All health, aged care, and other facilities where health services are provided, should develop Environmental Management Plans including goals and targets to improve their environmental profile and reduce their emissions profile. This should include reduction of:
  - a) general and clinical waste;
  - b) energy usage;
  - c) water and resource consumption; and
  - d) levels of pollution generated by the facility.
8. All health, aged care, and other facilities where health services are provided, should develop policies and protocols to minimise the use of single use and disposable products and seek alternatives where clinically appropriate.
9. Environmental hazards must be identified and controlled in relation to maintenance and decommissioning activities, and eliminated at their source wherever possible.



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10. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing are encouraged to be socially aware and proactive in relation to environmental issues and to initiate and support workplace sustainability initiatives.
11. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing have the right to participate in the formulation and implementation of policy and action plans to establish environmentally sustainable techniques and practices in the workplace. This includes Environment Management Plans.
12. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing, without fear of victimisation, have the right to bring to the attention of colleagues, employers, their professional and industrial organisation and the public, the dangers of environmentally harmful processes and products.

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*Endorsed November 2011*  
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*Reviewed and re-endorsed May 2018*  
*Reviewed and re-endorsed May 2021*

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References

1. Australians Together (2021). *The importance of land*. Available at <https://australianstogether.org.au/discover/indigenous-culture/the-importance-of-land/>
2. World Health Organization (1986). *The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*. Geneva: WHO Available at: [https://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/129532/Ottawa\\_Charter.pdf](https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/129532/Ottawa_Charter.pdf)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the ANMF Policy on Climate Change.