



## International recruitment of nurses and midwives

The movement of nurses and midwives between countries was an international phenomenon contributing to the personal and professional development of individual nurses and midwives and to the provision of nursing and midwifery care.

While international mobility of nurses and midwives is nothing new, there has been large scale, targeted, international recruitment by developed countries to address domestic shortages.

In Australia, international recruitment has been a strategy regularly utilised to resolve workforce shortages.

Recruitment of nurses and midwives from less resourced countries to meet the healthcare needs of well-resourced nations was of such growing concern the World Health Organisation declared that active recruitment of healthcare workers and its related migration as one of the greatest global health threats in the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>1</sup>.

Due to the global pandemic\*, now more than ever before, Governments must acknowledge the workforce shortage issue at a local level by implementing strategies that properly plan and manage the domestic nursing and midwifery workforce.

A primary strategy must include inter-government agreements which protect the interests of host and source countries, with particular acknowledgment of the need to minimise the negative impacts on the provision of health services in developing countries.

The ANMF Federal Office is the central point for all enquiries from international recruitment companies or any other source seeking information regarding the recruitment of nurses and midwives from overseas.

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

1. The implication of global competition for nurses and midwives necessitates ethical consideration, as aggressive recruitment from developing countries may have potentially unwanted consequences for the health systems of the source country(ies).
2. Overseas recruitment programs must not be used as a primary strategy to overcome nursing and midwifery shortages in Australia and internationally, or as an alternative to educational opportunities for the existing nursing/midwifery workforce.
3. Overseas working visa programs should not be utilised by Australian Governments of any level as a solution to the underemployment or unemployment of Australian graduate nurses and midwives.
4. Governments must commit more resources for workforce planning, education and improving pay and conditions in order to attract and retain domestic nurses and midwives.
5. Employers wishing to recruit nurses and midwives internationally must:
  - a) Have first introduced a range of strategies aimed at attracting, recruiting and retaining nurses and midwives residing in Australia;
  - b) Provide internationally recruited nurses and midwives with employment conditions the same as those offered to nurses and midwives in Australia; and
  - c) Meet the Australian Department of Immigration requirements.

\*The novel coronavirus outbreak was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the Director-General of the World Health Organisation on 30 January 2020.<sup>2</sup>



6. Employers who recruit nurses and midwives internationally must not:
  - a) Charge nurses and midwives excessive costs for transport and accommodation associated with recruitment (or allow agents acting on their behalf to do so);
  - b) Charge nurses and midwives for recruitment agency costs incurred in the country of origin;
  - c) Dismiss a nurse or midwife on a work visa without providing them with due process or adequate warning and an opportunity to find other employment before reporting the termination of employment to the Department of Immigration.
7. Prior to the recruitment of international nurses and midwives, employers must exhaust all avenues to employ nurses and midwives domestically. The employer must demonstrate that they have undertaken appropriate market testing, by all available means, to ensure that any local nurses and midwives who may be potential candidates are aware of the employment opportunity.
8. Employers seeking to recruit and employ nurses and midwives from other countries must provide the following:
  - a) Transparency and fairness in recruitment practice;
  - b) Effective human resource planning and development including mentoring and orientation;
  - c) Full access to employment opportunities and flexible environments;
  - d) Standards, Terms and Conditions consistent with the domestic workforce;
  - e) Freedom from discrimination;
  - f) The right to be informed regarding freedom of association; and
  - g) Assistance to meet the necessary Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Registration Standards including the English Language Skills Standard, as well as the requirements for recognition of the nurses and midwives' overseas qualifications as determined by the NMBA.
9. Employers of nurses and midwives in Australia must be required to recognise experience gained overseas which is assessed at a comparable standard for the purpose of experience and incremental payments in line with state and territory industrial instruments.
10. Procedures for the assessment of nursing and midwifery applications from other countries must be equitable and fair, be based on nationally agreed proficiency in English language, determine that all other NMBA Registration Standards have been met, and recognise previous experience and prior formal educational qualifications.
11. Nurses and midwives who choose to move overseas must have their overseas work of a comparable standard recognised in Australia for the purpose of retention of their registration with the NMBA.

*Endorsed June 1998*

*Reviewed and re-endorsed November 2004*

*Reviewed and re-endorsed December 2007*

*Reviewed and re-endorsed August 2008*

*Reviewed and re-endorsed June 2011*

*Reviewed and re-endorsed May 2015*

*Reviewed and re-endorsed May 2018*

*Reviewed and re-endorsed May 2021*

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1. Shaffer, F.A. et al (2016). Code of ethical international recruitment practices: the CGFNS alliance case study. *Human Resources for Health*, 14 (31): pp113-119. Available at <https://human-resources-health.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12960-016-0127-6#citeas>
  2. World Health Organisation. *Statement on the second meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee regarding the outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)*, 30 January 2020. Available at [https://www.who.int/news/item/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)](https://www.who.int/news/item/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov))