



Protecting workers from the risks of tobacco smoke position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement sets out the minimum actions the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) considers employers must take to uphold the right of nurses, midwives, and assistants in nursing to a healthy and safe working environment where they are not exposed to the risks associated with tobacco smoke.¹ It should be read with the ANMF position statement: *Workplace health and safety*.

2. Definitions

A **workplace** is any location where nurses, midwives, assistants in nursing or volunteers perform their work, including the homes of people receiving care and vehicles. This includes outdoor areas and courtyards.

3. Context

All workers have the right to a healthy and safe working environment. This includes a workplace where they are not exposed to the risks associated with tobacco smoke. In Australia, this right is protected through state, territory and national workplace health and safety (WHS) laws and regulations.

The ANMF plays an active role in ensuring that WHS rights are upheld and that governments, health services and employers respond to new and emerging risks and evidence.

Evidence shows smoking is linked to a range of conditions. These include various cancers and cardiovascular diseases, as well as type 2 diabetes, hip fractures and reproductive problems in women.² Inhaling environmental tobacco smoke or second-hand smoke is also associated with similar harmful effects. There is also evidence that third-hand exposure – that is exposure to the chemicals produced during smoking that are absorbed into the surfaces of natural and synthetic materials – is also potentially hazardous.

4. Position

Government responsibilities

It is the position of the ANMF that to uphold the right of workers, including nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing, to be protected from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke when at work:

1. Governments must:
 - a. legislate for and enforce smoke-free work environments
 - b. promote the benefits of smoke-free work environments
 - c. help health services disseminate educational material about the hazards of smoking
 - d. help employers support nurses, midwives, assistants in nursing and the people for whom they provide care to stop smoking.

¹ Assistants in nursing refers to all care workers however titled.

² See Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Risk factors to health: Tobacco smoking* at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/risk-factors/risk-factors-to-health/contents/tobacco-smoking>.



Employer responsibilities

It is the position of the ANMF that:

2. In consultation with workers; the WHS committee; health and safety representatives; employers; unions; and experts, employers must develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to achieve a smoke-free workplace.³
3. This strategy should include:
 - a. a smoke-free environment policy – this includes not allowing any facility in the workplace to sell or provide tobacco products and penalties for any policy breaches
 - b. clear implementation and enforcement arrangements that do not require nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing to enforce the smoke-free policy
 - c. clear and prominent advice to staff, people receiving care and visitors that the workplace is smoke-free – this includes advice to all job applicants
 - d. information on the smoke-free policy to people planning admission – this should include smoking cessation information for smokers
 - e. an educational awareness program to encourage staff and people receiving care to stop or reduce smoking
 - f. initiatives to help workers manage nicotine dependence and stop smoking such as:
 - sponsored attendance at courses
 - cost price interventions including nicotine replacement therapy
 - paid leave to attend courses and participate in therapy
 - g. nicotine replacement therapy for people as part of their care
 - h. adequate cigarette butt disposal facilities at facility perimeter.
4. Employers must also ensure that the lifestyle choices of people receiving care in residential settings, including in their own home, do not impinge upon the right of workers to a smoke-free environment. To this end, employers must provide information to people receiving care in residential settings about:
 - a. the smoke-free policy and the risks of smoking and second and third hand smoke to workers
 - b. the requirement that if they wish to smoke, they must do so in a single designated outdoor area that has appropriate controls in place to minimise the risk to nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing.

³ See the ANMF position statement: *Workplace health and safety* for more information about the role and powers of health and safety representatives.



Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing responsibilities

It is the position of the ANMF that:

5. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing should:
 - familiarise themselves with, and adhere to, their employer's smoke-free policy
 - provide appropriate literature, access to therapy and support to help smokers (including colleagues and people in their care) stop smoking.

5. Position statement management

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