



anf position  
statement

# australian nursing federation

## compulsory reporting for nurses, assistants in nursing and other unlicensed workers (however titled) in aged care settings

Older people in receipt of aged care services have a right to be cared for in a safe environment. Any abuse of an older person is unacceptable and may be a criminal offence.

The abuse of older people occurs when there is any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to an older person. Abuse can include physical, sexual, financial, psychological and social abuse and/or neglect.<sup>1</sup>

This position statement applies to licensed nurses<sup>2</sup> and assistants in nursing and other unlicensed workers (however titled)<sup>3</sup> providing care and services to older people regardless of the setting in which that care is provided.

It is the position of the Australian Nursing Federation that:

1. Compulsory reporting is one element of a comprehensive response to the abuse of older persons. On its own, compulsory reporting will not prevent the abuse of older people.
2. For compulsory reporting to be effective, clear policies and protocols at the work place level must specify and support the process to be followed by the person making a report of any alleged abuse.
3. Licensed nurses, unlicensed workers (however titled) and other staff are required to report any suspected abuse of an older person immediately to their employer, who is required to report that suspected abuse to the police.
4. The person to whom the report is made has a legal obligation to action the report and to advise the person making the report that the report has been actioned and how.
5. If the person making the report is not satisfied the action taken is appropriate, they have an obligation to make the report to a higher authority.
6. The person making the report must not be subject to any victimisation or discrimination at the workplace as a result of making the report.
7. The Australian Government has a responsibility to adequately fund the authority to which reports of the abuse of an older person is made so that a full and comprehensive investigation can be undertaken.
8. The person against whom the complaint is made has the right to be informed of the complaint and the nature of the complaint; be entitled to representation; and be accorded a process which is fair, transparent and unbiased.
9. The employer has a responsibility to provide education to all employees on the abuse of older people and compulsory reporting and to promote a workplace environment that creates a culture of respect for older people.

10. Registered and enrolled nurses<sup>4</sup> are bound by codes of ethics and conduct which they are required to comply with when providing care to older people and when responding to any maltreatment of older people in their care.

*endorsed by federal executive november 2006*

#### references

1. This definition of abuse was endorsed in 2000 by all Australian state and territories through the Healthy Ageing Taskforce (<http://www.eapu.com.au>).
2. Licensed nurses in Australia are registered nurses (registered nurse division 1 in Victoria) and enrolled nurses (registered nurse division 2 in Victoria).
3. This is a generic term to describe such classifications as assistants in nursing or personal care assistants.
4. Enrolled nurses are called Registered Nurse Division 2 in Victoria.