



anf policy

australian nursing federation

conscientious objection

It is the policy of the Australian Nursing Federation that:

1. Nurses and midwives have a right to refuse to participate in procedures which they judge, on strongly held moral beliefs, to be unacceptable (conscientious objection). Fear, personal convenience or preference, are not sufficient basis for conscientious objection.
2. In exercising their conscientious objection, nurses and midwives must take all reasonable steps to ensure that quality of care and patient safety is not compromised.
3. Nurses and midwives in the course of their employment must not refuse to carry out urgent procedures which are life-saving measures.
4. In situations of conscientious objection, the nurse or midwife should express a desire not to participate in that procedure, in advance if possible. The employer must allow the nurse or midwife to leave the area or not participate in the procedure as soon as practicable without any discriminatory action being taken.
5. Nurses and midwives should avoid employment positions where they can foresee that a situation of conscientious objection may arise.
6. Nurses and midwives accepting employment positions where they know they may be called on to be involved in situations at variance with their beliefs, have a responsibility to acquaint their employer with this fact.
7. Nurses and midwives should support colleagues who exercise their right to conscientious objection, and endeavour to prevent them being placed in situations that may compromise their moral beliefs.
8. No discriminatory action should be taken against any nurse or midwife professing a conscientious objection either in an application for, or during employment.
9. Health care agencies should provide or assist with access to a counselling service to meet the needs of their nursing and midwifery staff.

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