



anf policy

australian nursing federation

conscientious objection

It is the policy of the Australian Nursing Federation that:

1. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing (however titled) have a right to refuse to participate in procedures which they judge, on strongly held religious, moral and ethical 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, midwives and assistants in nursing (however titled) must take all reasonable steps to ensure that quality of care, patient safety, and advanced care directives are not compromised.
3. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing (however titled) 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, midwife or assistants in nursing (however titled) should express a desire not to participate in that procedure, in advance if possible. The employer must allow the nurse, midwife or assistants in nursing (however titled) to leave the area or not participate in the procedure as soon as practicable without any discriminatory action being taken.
5. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing (however titled) should avoid employment positions where they can foresee that a situation of conscientious objection may arise.
6. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing (however titled) 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, midwives and assistants in nursing (however titled) should support colleagues who exercise their right to conscientious objection, and endeavour to prevent them being placed in situations that may compromise their religious, moral and ethical beliefs.
8. No discriminatory action should be taken against any nurse, midwife or assistants in nursing (however titled) professing a conscientious objection either in an application for, or during employment.
9. Health and aged care facilities should provide or assist with access to a counselling service to meet the needs of their nursing and midwifery staff.

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