



## Health and the environment

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

1. Individual and population wellbeing is inextricably linked with the health of the environment. A healthy environment not only leads to improved health for the population but it also encourages people to make choices for better health (WHO Director General 2000).<sup>1</sup>
2. Public policy underpins the promotion and maintenance of health at both the individual and the population level.
3. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation supports:
  - 3.1 the development of a health and aged care service sector which focuses on health promotion, prevention and restoration, and involves communities in decision making;
  - 3.2 environmental impact assessment criteria being included in accreditation processes;
  - 3.3 the national standardisation of environmental impact assessments;
  - 3.4 the inclusion of environmental issues in nursing and midwifery education;
  - 3.5 collaboration between nurses, midwives and medical industry manufacturers to design bio-degradable disposable products; and
  - 3.6 nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing advocating for healthy environments.
4. All health, aged care, and other facilities where health services are provided (for example schools) acknowledge and accept responsibility for the environmental impact of health and aged care service delivery.
5. All health, aged care, and other facilities where health services are provided (for example schools) should establish a mechanism which, in collaboration with stakeholders and other appropriate personnel, advises on policies and protocols in relation to environmental issues; undertakes environmental impact assessments; provides advice on new and existing products and buildings; and seeks to operate in the most resource efficient manner.
6. In order to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, all health, aged care, and other facilities where health services are provided (for example schools) should carry out environmental audits to assess their: energy use, water and resource consumption and efficiency, pollution of soil, air and waterways, and waste generation and disposal.
7. All health, aged care, and other facilities where health services are provided (for example schools) should set goals and targets in relation to the reduction of: general and clinical waste; energy usage; water and resource consumption; and levels of pollution generated by the facility.



8. All health, aged care, and other facilities where health services are provided (for example schools) should develop policies and protocols to minimise the over-use of all disposable products and seek alternatives where appropriate.
9. Environmental hazards must be identified and controlled in relation to maintenance and decommissioning activities, and eliminated at their source wherever possible.
10. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing are encouraged to be socially aware and politically active in relation to environmental issues and support workplace sustainability initiatives.
11. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing have the right to participate in the formulation and implementation of action plans to establish environmentally sustainable production techniques and practices in the workplace.
12. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing, without fear of victimisation, have the right to bring to the attention of colleagues, employers and the public, the dangers of environmentally harmful processes and products.

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