

ANMF Policy

Use of Social Media and Online Networking

Social media' describes the online and mobile tools that people use to share opinions, information, experiences, images, and video or audio clips and includes websites and applications used for social networking. Common sources of social media include, but are not limited to, social networking sites such as Facebook and Linkedin, blogs (personal, professional and those published anonymously), WOMO, True Local and microblogs such as Twitter, content-sharing websites such as YouTube and Instagram, and discussion forums and message boards.¹

Using social media is part of daily life for many people. Social media can be fun, informative, strategic and perhaps even necessary to users.

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

- 1. Access to social media sites, feeds and groups has become simpler and more affordable for most Australians.
- Social media is also used by various authorities and been used for emergency communication, for example, delivering immediate fire danger messages during bushfires, or cyclone warnings, flood alerts and notification of other disasters.
- Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing are entitled to private and personal lives. However
 the sharing nature of online social media can create issues when the personal encroaches on
 the professional, or where the lines between private person and regulated professional
 become blurred.
- 4. Nurses and midwives have professional obligations under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* (the National Law) and as defined and described in the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Professional Practice Framework².
- 5. All employees should understand their obligations and responsibilities when using social media. Nurses and midwives have obligations and responsibilities that are described in the Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia and Code of Professional Conduct for Midwives in Australia which are part of the NMBA Professional Practice Framework³.
- 6. Nurses and midwives are also subject to many other Commonwealth and state or territory laws. In relation to social media, the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)⁴ (Privacy Act) is particularly relevant.
- 7. Nurses and midwives should understand and comply with any professional standards or guidelines, and with the polices of their workplace relating to privacy and social media
- 8. Many people using social media believe they are protected by setting their Facebook (or other social network) page to private, or that their spam and virus filters protect their emails and attachments. This is not usually the case. Each nurse and midwife should be aware of the limitations of so-called private settings on their electronic devices and within the social media sites they use.
- 9. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing should not make assumptions about the privacy or security settings or status of other devices they may use, including workplace computers, protect them in any way.
- 10. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing should use their personal electronic devices in accordance with the policies in their workplace.



- 11. The proliferation of personal devices with capacity for instant online access and capable of high-quality photography has led to an increase in the number of health professionals and clinicians using their own devices to take photos of patients (or their presenting issue, for example wounds, rashes, fractures, foreign bodies in eyes) for patient's files and/or for transmission to a relevant specialist. ⁵ Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing should exercise care to ensure they work within their organisation's policies and maintain professional confidentiality and privacy standards.
- 12. High among the risks of using a personal device to create and transmit images for professional purposes are consent to capture and use the image, storage and, ultimately destruction of the image (on the device); and where and by whom the image may be accessible once placed online, despite apparent destruction (including by email). Consent should be in writing and requires active engagement and communication with the person, including where the image will be used and how the image and accompanying information will be managed.
- 13. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing should carefully consider their actions and the content of any post (or re-post) to social media before posting. Consideration should be given to the intent of the post; professional and regulatory requirements; laws for example those relating to libel, discrimination and racial hatred; the tone of the post; the content of the post; who the post is to and how that person or site may manage or re-transmit the post; who may have access to the site receiving a post; how the original post may be used by unrelated third parties; how posts may affect reputations; how difficult it may be to delete or remove posts.
- 14. Use of online social media may have significant implications for advertising for nurses and midwives who are private practitioners or who work in the private practices of other regulated health professionals. Please see the ANMF policy *Advertising for nurses and midwives*

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References

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) Social media policy for registered health practitioners, 2014. p.3 Available at http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines.aspx

Available at http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines.aspx

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Professional Practice Framework includes and is available at http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Codes-Guidelines.aspx:

- National Competency Standards,
- National Decision Making Framework,
- Codes of Ethics, including:
 - Code of Ethics for Nurses in Australia 2008
 - Code of Ethics for Midwives in Australia 2008
 - Codes of Professional Conduct, including:
 - Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia 2008,
 - Code of Professional Conduct for Midwives in Australia 2008 and
- Registration Standards, including:
 - Recency of Practice,
 - Continuing Professional Development,
 - Criminal History,
 - Professional Indemnity Insurance Arrangements for Nurses,
 - Professional Indemnity Insurance Arrangements for Midwives,
 - English Language Skills,
 - Nurse Practitioner Endorsement,
 - Eligible Midwives,
 - Endorsement Scheduled Medicines for Registered Nurses and Midwives
 - Endorsement for Scheduled Medicines for Midwives
- The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner has useful Guidelines assisting understanding if the Privacy Act. These Guidelines include information on gathering, storing and destruction of personal information and consent. The Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) is available, along with information and guidelines, from the Office of the Australian Information Officer at http://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-act/the-privacy-act/
- Burns, K. and Belton, S. <u>Clinicians and their cameras: policy, ethics and practice in an Australian tertiary hospital</u>. Australian health Review, 2013, 37, 473-441



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To be read in conjunction with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) Social Media and Online networking Information Sheet; the ANMF Advertising for Nurses and Midwives Fact Sheet; the ANMF Information Management and Information Technology Policy and the ANMF Privacy Policy.