



Vaccination and immunisation position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement sets out the responsibilities the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) considers registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives must meet in relation to vaccination and immunisation. It should be read with the ANMF position statements: *Workplace health and safety; Protecting workers from infectious diseases and hazardous substances; and Personal protective equipment.*

2. Definitions

Vaccination is when a health worker provides a vaccine either by a needle or drops in the mouth. Vaccines produce an immune response in the body without causing illness.

Immunisation in this context is the process of becoming immune to a disease through vaccination.

3. Context

UNICEF and the World Health Organization oversee a vaccination program that averts two to three million deaths from communicable diseases each year.¹

Nurses and midwives in Australia are part of this effort through the *National immunisation program* which aims to increase national vaccination rates for preventable diseases.² The ANMF supports this program.

The ANMF also actively encourages all nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing to fully maintain routine vaccination, unless medically contraindicated, so they:³

- maintain a level of protection from the diseases they are exposed to in health care settings
- contribute to the prevention of work-related disease
- contribute to 'herd immunity' across Australia.

4. Position

It is the position of the ANMF that:

1. Vaccination is a safe, practical, evidence-based public health program that:
 - protects individual community members from many diseases
 - prevents the spread of disease across the population and within specific communities.⁴
2. Health services must take all reasonable, practicable steps to provide a safe workplace for employees, patients, residents and visitors. This may include requiring workers to be vaccinated where vaccination is clinically indicated and available.⁵

¹ World Health Organisation. 2019. *Immunization coverage fact sheet*. See <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/immunization-coverage>.

² See the National Immunisation Program at <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/national-immunisation-program>.

³ Assistants in nursing refers to all care workers however titled.

⁴ Australia. Department of Health. 2019. *Immunisation*. See <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation>.

⁵ Because of this legal requirement, nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing may experience restrictions on where they can work, for their own protection and the protection of others, if they do not meet a health service's immunisation requirement.



3. Nurses and midwives must practice in accordance with the professional standards, codes and guidelines set by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA).
4. The NMBA, in its position statement: *Nurses, midwives and vaccination*:⁶
 - expects all registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives to use the best available evidence in making practice decisions – this includes when providing information about public health issues, vaccination and immunisation
 - recognises the Australian national immunisation handbook (10th edition) as the authoritative and accepted evidence-based for health professionals for the safe and effective use of vaccines and the public health benefits of vaccination⁷
 - encourages registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives to make a complaint to Ahpra if they consider another registered nurse, enrolled nurse or midwife is providing information about vaccinations that is false, misleading or deceptive and contrary to this accepted evidence base
 - affirms that distributing any published anti-vaccination material or advice which is false, misleading or deceptive may constitute a summary offence and result in prosecution by Ahpra.
5. Registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives should therefore:
 - lead by example and maintain their own immunisation status through routine vaccination and boosters – this includes meeting evidence-based workplace vaccination requirements unless medically contraindicated
 - provide evidence-based information and promote authoritative sources of information about vaccination and immunisation to encourage informed decision making
 - be informed of the myths and facts about vaccination and immunisation so they can answer questions professionally⁸
 - advocate for local and affordable access to evidence-based vaccination programs for the population groups and communities they serve
 - be aware of the authority inherent in their role when discussing vaccination and immunisation with the public, including on social media, and ensure they always draw on the accepted evidence base.

5. Position statement management

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⁶ Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. 2016. *Position statement on nurses, midwives and vaccination*. See <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Position-Statements/vaccination.aspx>.

⁷ Australia. Department of Health. 2018. *Immunisation handbook*. See <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/>.

⁸ Australia. Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA). 2013. *Myths and realities: responding to arguments against vaccination – a guide for providers* (5th ed). Canberra: DoHA.