



International recruitment of nurses and midwives position statement

1. Purpose

This position statement details the key principles and practices the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) considers Australian governments and employers should follow before resorting to international recruitment and when they opt to do so. It should be read with the ANMF position statement: *Free trade agreements*.

2. Definitions

International recruitment refers to the process of identifying, attracting, interviewing, selecting, hiring and onboarding employees from across the world.

3. Context

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the global competition for, and active recruitment of, healthcare workers to be one of the greatest global health threats of the 21st century.¹ The novel coronavirus outbreak, declared by the WHO to be a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020, exemplified this.²

In Australia, international recruitment remains a strategy to resolve healthcare workforce shortages, often at the expense of strategies to ensure a self-sufficient supply of healthcare workers, including nurses and midwives. This raises ethical considerations, with the aggressive recruitment of nurses and midwives from developing countries having serious consequences for healthcare in those countries.

4. Position

Government responsibilities

It is the position of the ANMF that:

1. Australian governments must not use overseas recruitment programs as a primary strategy to overcome local nursing and midwifery shortages or as an alternative to educational opportunities for the existing nursing and midwifery workforce.
2. Australian governments must not use overseas working visa programs as a solution to the underemployment or unemployment of Australian graduate nurses and midwives.
3. Australian governments must address the local healthcare workforce shortage by implementing effective strategies to plan and manage the domestic nursing and midwifery workforce. This includes committing sufficient resources for education and improving pay and conditions to attract and retain domestic nurses and midwives.
4. Where Australian governments intend to use overseas recruitment, they must enter into an inter-government agreement with the source country that adheres to the WHO

¹ Shaffer FA, Bakhshi M, Dutka JT, Phillips J. 2016. Code of ethical international recruitment practices: the CGFNS alliance case study. *Human Resources for Health*, 14 (31): pp113-119. Available at <https://human-resources-health.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12960-016-0127-6#citeas>.

² World Health Organization. 2020. *Statement on the second meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee regarding the outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)*, 30 January 2020. Available at [https://www.who.int/news/item/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)](https://www.who.int/news/item/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)).



Code of practice for international recruitment and minimises the negative impacts on the health services in that country.³

5. Australian governments must ensure the procedures for attracting, assessing and accepting nursing and midwifery applications from other countries:
 - prioritise permanent migration and support increased pathways to permanency
 - are equitable and fair
 - include a nationally agreed assessment of English language proficiency
 - ensure all other Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) registration standards are met
 - fairly recognise previous experience and prior formal educational qualifications.

Employer responsibilities

It is the position of the ANMF that:

6. Before recruiting international nurses and midwives, employers must exhaust all avenues to employ nurses and midwives domestically. This includes being able to prove they have undertaken appropriate market testing and action, by all available means, to ensure local nurses and midwives who may be potential candidates are aware of the employment opportunities.
7. Employers seeking to recruit nurses and midwives internationally must meet the Australian Department of Immigration requirements and ensure the following:
 - transparency and fairness in recruitment practice
 - effective human resource planning and development including mentoring and orientation
 - full access to employment opportunities and the same standards, terms and conditions as the domestic workforce
 - freedom from discrimination, freedom of association and all other workplace rights
 - help to meet the NMBA registration standards including the English language skills standard and any recognition of overseas qualification requirements.
8. Employers who recruit nurses and midwives internationally must recognise overseas experience that has been assessed as of a comparable standard for the purpose of accessing the incremental payments in the relevant industrial instruments.⁴

³ WHO. 2010. Global code of practice on the international recruitment of health personnel. Available at <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/wha68.32>.

⁴ For registration and remuneration purposes, the NMBA and employers should also recognise the overseas work of a comparable standard by nurses and midwives employed in Australia who move overseas for work and then return.



9. Employers who recruit nurses and midwives internationally must not:
- charge nurses and midwives excessive costs for the transport and accommodation associated with their recruitment or allow their agents to do so
 - charge nurses and midwives for recruitment agency costs incurred in their home country
 - dismiss a nurse or midwife on a work visa without due process or adequate warning and a fair opportunity to find other employment before reporting their termination to the Department of Immigration.

5. Position statement management

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