



## Caring for people living with disability position statement

### 1. Purpose

This position statement sets out the responsibilities the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) considers nurses, midwives, assistants in nursing, and governments should meet to advance human rights and healthcare for people living with disability.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. Definitions

Australia's *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) defines **disability** as total or partial loss of a person's bodily or mental functions or a part of the body; the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body; a disorder or malfunction that results in a person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; and a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment, or that results in disturbed behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

The United Nations *Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities* recognises that disability results from the interaction between a person with impairment/s and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Context

People living with disability have the right to 'full and complete realisation of the human rights of all persons and fundamental freedoms'.<sup>4</sup> To advance these rights, in 2017, the Australian Government established the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to ensure people living with permanent disability that significantly affects their communication, mobility, self-care or self-management have access to the long-term, high-quality care and support they need and choose.

Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing are important members of the healthcare team assisting people living with disability both within, and outside of, the NDIS. They work collaboratively with the person, their carer/s, and other health professionals and service providers.

### 4. Position

#### Responsibilities of nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing

It is the position of the ANMF that all nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing must:

1. work towards creating a community, health service and workplace culture that does not discriminate against or devalue any person's worth or contribution.
2. deliver models of care and support for people living with disability that:
  - are person-centred and flexible
  - allow age related lifestyle choices and social integration opportunities
  - promote a holistic approach to each person's health care needs

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<sup>1</sup> The term assistant in nursing includes care workers however titled.

<sup>2</sup> *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00125>.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations. 2006. *Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities and Optional protocol*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. 2019. *Disability inclusion strategy*. Available at [https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/assets/documentation/UN\\_Disability\\_Inclusion\\_Strategy\\_english.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/assets/documentation/UN_Disability_Inclusion_Strategy_english.pdf).



- participate in developing programs and research that promote acceptance and inclusion and ensure person-centred, evidence-based care is delivered.

### Government responsibilities

It is the position of the ANMF that:

- Australian governments should ensure nursing and midwifery education programs:
  - prepare all nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing to assist with the care, rehabilitation and maintenance of optimal health for people living with disability
  - provide students with a greater understanding of the barriers and challenges faced by people living with disability and their families and carers and
  - equip students with the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to advance quality of life and independence for the people living with disability in their care
- Australian governments should ensure the NDIS:
  - focuses on intensive early intervention where evidence indicates participants will benefit through improved functioning or a reduced or delayed decline in functioning
  - includes a comprehensive information and referral service to help participants access mainstream, disability, specialist and community supports and health services
  - supports participants who have informal supports such as carers and family in place to maintain these supports while the supporters want, and are able, to do so
  - gives all Australians the confidence that they, or someone they care for, will receive timely and appropriate support if they have, or acquire, a disability
  - is subject to a rigorous and transparent monitoring regime to assess whether participants are benefitting from the scheme and the scheme is maintaining its intended focus
- Australian governments must provide specialist disability accommodation for young people with disability so they receive the specialist care they require in an appropriate setting and are not placed in aged care services.<sup>5</sup>

### 5. Position statement management

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<sup>5</sup> This is consistent with recommendation 74 of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Safety and Quality. 2021. *Final report: Care, dignity and respect*. Available at: <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/aged-care>.