



Position Statement on Voluntary Euthanasia

Re-endorsed by Annual Conference 2013

The following definition of voluntary euthanasia has been developed and adopted by the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association:

Voluntary euthanasia *is an intervention by one person to end the life of another person with that person's informed consent and with the primary intent of relieving pain and suffering and causing death.*

1. Nurses and midwives are required to work within the NSW legislative framework. Voluntary euthanasia is illegal under current NSW legislation.
2. There is often a great deal of confusion surrounding the terminology used when discussing euthanasia, as well as some common misconceptions and incorrect assumptions resulting from that confusion.
3. In NSW, competent individuals have the right to refuse treatment. The withholding or withdrawal of treatment which is burdensome or futile and which may or may not lead to the death or hasten the death of the person is not voluntary euthanasia. To ensure clarity and avoid confusion, the use of the terms active and passive euthanasia is not supported.
4. It is recognised that palliative care may not meet the needs of all people with a terminal illness and that some people would choose the option of voluntary euthanasia if it was available.
5. Nurses and midwives have a right to their own personal belief on this issue and to have this belief acknowledged and respected. Nurses and midwives also have the right to be involved in public debate and action to support their view.
6. The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association acknowledges its role in the dissemination of information and the facilitation of debate and encourages nurses and midwives to be fully informed about issues relating to voluntary euthanasia.
7. The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association acknowledges and supports the right of individuals to self-determination.



Address all correspondence to:

General Secretary, NSW Nurses & Midwives' Association, 50 O'Dea Avenue, Waterloo NSW 2017

(02) 8595 1234 1300 267 962 (02) 9662 1414 www.nswnma.asn.au gensec@nswnma.asn.au