



**NEW SOUTH WALES NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION**  
**AUSTRALIAN NURSING AND MIDWIFERY FEDERATION NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH**



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# POSITION STATEMENT ON TOBACCO

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**Re-Endorsed by Annual Conference 2022**

**NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association**  
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# Position Statement on Tobacco

Note: This position statement should be read in conjunction with the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association Policy on Drug and Alcohol Issues.

## THE NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION RECOGNISES THAT:

- Tobacco and its associated problems present a significant burden for NSW<sup>1</sup>.
- Smoking rates remain unacceptably high, particularly among Aboriginal people, pregnant women, young people, people with mental illness and those from low socioeconomic, disadvantaged and other specific groups <sup>2,3</sup>.

## THE NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES ASSOCIATION ADOPTS THE POSITION THAT:

1. NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association is supportive of implementing a smoke-free workplace, efforts being made to reduce the take-up and use of tobacco products in NSW and protecting people from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke under the New South Wales Tobacco Strategy Work Plan 2019-2021<sup>3</sup>.
2. Under the NSW *Work Health Safety Act 2011*, all workers and other persons have a right to perform their work in an environment they are protected from harm where the risks to health, safety and welfare from the exposure to environmental tobacco smoke are eliminated or minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.
3. There is no safe level of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke. Scientific evidence confirms that smokers face significantly increased risks of death and/or illness from numerous cancers, heart disease, stroke, atherosclerosis, abdominal aortic aneurysm, emphysema and other respiratory diseases. Passive smoke has also been shown to have negative health effects.
4. Nurses and midwives should be protected from second-hand smoke and be provided with smoking cessation opportunities consistent with the priorities of the strategy work plan.
5. Nurses and midwives should abide by the NSW Health, Smoke-free Health Care Policies by not smoking in buildings, grounds or vehicles consistent with Local Health District, Private Hospital or Aged Care Facility smoke free by-laws which also apply to electronic cigarettes<sup>4</sup>. These policies include requirements of the *Smoke-free Environment Act 2000* and the *Smoke-free Environment Amendment Act 2018*<sup>5,6</sup>

6. Nurses and midwives have an important role in the health care sector in reducing the risks to health associated with tobacco used by clients *Managing Nicotine Dependence: A Guide for NSW Health Staff*, produced by NSW Health as an evidence-based protocol which is a useful framework for the treatment of nicotine dependent patients<sup>7</sup>.
7. Nurses and midwives can provide evidence-based cessation strategies and advice opportunistically as a clinical intervention during routine clinical practice in consultations with smokers, and during admission and prior to their discharge from hospital. Such interventions should be inclusive of culturally appropriate approaches that address the needs of priority populations and provide support to mothers as part of routine care throughout pregnancy.
8. The purpose of brief intervention for smoking cessation is to increase the individual smokers motivation to quit and stay quit and provide discharge referral for follow up intervention.
9. Assessment, information, education, support, nicotine replacement therapy and referral should be offered to all nicotine dependent nurses and midwives and also to patients whether they intend to continue smoking on discharge or not. A range of tools for health professionals to use and brief intervention strategies is readily available from NSW Health<sup>8</sup>.
10. Exemptions may be applied for from the Smoke-free Laws for designated smoking areas however workplaces must still implement smoke-free policies that ensure minimisation of exposure of second-hand smoke to nurses and midwives as far as reasonably practicable.
11. The rights of nurses and midwives to a safe workplace under the Work Health Safety Act must be considered above considerations of consumer dignity and choice as described in Aged Care Quality Standards.
12. Where designated smoking areas are implemented, they must be located outside buildings in accordance with Smoke-Free Laws in a well-ventilated area.
13. Smoking presents a fire risk. Assessment furniture, fittings and the surrounding environment must be undertaken in consultation with workers in implementing risk control strategies.
14. Consultation with staff and their representatives, including the NSW Nurses & Midwives' Association and Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), is critical to the effective implementation of relevant and sustainable policies and procedures and risk control strategies for preventing and managing the risks associated with exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

## REFERENCES

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<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/tobacco/Pages/managing-nicotine-dependence.aspx>
8. NSW Ministry of Health. *Tools for health professionals – Tobacco and Smoking*.  
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