



ACT
Government

ACT Health

Nurses and Midwives Towards a Safer Culture – The First Step

Strategy

*My safety... Your safety
Our priority*

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Executive summary

ACT Health has developed this strategy called *Nurses and Midwives: Towards a Safer Culture – The First Step – Strategy* (the Strategy) to support the fundamental rights of nurses and midwives working in ACT public health services to be safe and protected in their workplaces.

In 2016, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) ACT Branch advocated for a broad reaching, in-depth review of workplace safety, including a review of Occupational Violence and Aggression (OVA), challenging occupational behaviours and workforce practices to improve the safety of nurses and midwives.

In the same year, a commitment to developing the strategy was made in the Parliamentary Agreement for the 9th Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory. Meegan Fitzharris MLA, Minister for Health and Wellbeing, and Shane Rattenbury MLA, Minister for Mental Health initiated the development of a safety strategy for nurses and midwives.

The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a safe and healthy environment for our staff and all persons who enter workplaces where ACT public health services are delivered. The Strategy outlines a vision where staff, patients and visitors to ACT public health services are protected from harm and feel safe at all times. This work is led by ACT Health and also encompasses Canberra Health Services (CHS), the University of Canberra Hospital (UCH), and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce.

It is noted that CHS has commenced development of an occupational violence strategy which will help to define best practice in managing occupational violence. A working group chaired by the CHS CEO will lead this work and it will complement implementation of this strategy. CHS has also recently updated procedures relating to the classification of incidents to provide consistent and detailed data that can be utilised in occupational violence prevention strategies.

In late 2017, consultations with nurses and midwives were independently facilitated to inform the development of a discussion paper. Consultation identified the recognition and mitigation of workplace risks, adequate resource allocation, safety benchmarks, workplace design, policy, and education as factors needing to be addressed.

Further consultation was held around the discussion paper, before ACT Health developed this Strategy which outlines recommendations to prevent, reduce and manage the exposure of ACT nurses and midwives to occupational violence and other risks in their working environments.

Recommendations are grouped into four domains: Organisation Wide, Occupational Violence and Aggression, Challenging Occupational Behaviour, and Safe Work Practices.

The recommendations of this Strategy are:

Organisation Wide

- Review and strengthen governance
 - Review and strengthen workplace risk strategies, including identification, minimisation, prevention and reporting of risks
 - Promote a workplace culture of respect and staff empowerment
-

Occupational Violence and Aggression

- Develop and implement an Occupational Violence and Aggression management plan, including standards, guidelines and education
 - Develop a community, consumer and carer information campaign
-

Challenging Occupational Behaviours

- Improve leadership
 - Strengthen bullying and harassment prevention and management guidelines
 - Develop and implement workplace civility measuring and management guidelines
-

Safe Work Practices

- Embed best practice guidelines in the development of safe work practices
 - Continue to pursue safe workplace design principles in new builds and redevelopment of workplaces
-

This Strategy identifies the actions, deliverables and measures for success. Supporting these actions are the ACT Health Strategic Enablers.

To be implemented successfully, the *Nurses and Midwives: Towards a Safer Culture – The First Step – Strategy* needs an integrated, comprehensive and territory wide approach. Organisational leadership and dedicated funding are required to implement system wide changes in culture, governance, risk assessment, reporting, data collection and workplace practices.

The *Nurses and Midwives: Towards a Safer Culture – The First Step – Strategy* and the *ACT Health Work Health and Safety Strategic Plan (2018-2022)* together provide the foundation for positive cultural change in ACT public health settings, and a strategic approach to reduce harm to staff, patients, visitors, contractors and others.

Introduction

Workplace violence and aggression is a global problem confronting all health care workers. It is a major focus for health services as they strive to provide for the health and safety of workers within diverse and dynamic workplace environments.

Threats to staff safety are unacceptable at any level and in any circumstance. In the provision of public healthcare in the ACT, ACT Health, Canberra Health Services, the University of Canberra Hospital and Calvary Public Hospital Bruce are committed to improving workplace safety and continued compliance with their legislated responsibility to protect workers and others from harm.

Under the *Work Health Safety Act 2011 (ACT)*, all reasonably practicable steps must be taken to protect workers through the elimination or minimisation of risks related to work practices.

The *ACT Health Work Health Safety Strategic Plan (2018-2022)* supports our ambition 'to be recognised as a high performing health service that provides person-centred, safe and effective care', as identified in the *ACT Health Quality Strategy*. The Strategic Plan provides the foundation for positive cultural change in ACT public health settings and a strategic approach to reduce harm to staff, consumers, visitors, contractors and others. To help reduce costs and loss of skilled staff due to injury, ACT Health needs to reduce exposure to work health and safety (WHS) risks and prevent psychological harm and physical injuries.

The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a safe and healthy environment; an environment where our staff and all persons who enter ACT public health workplaces are protected from harm and feel safe at all times. In keeping with the ACT Health core value of Excellence, this can be achieved when:

- exposure to work health and safety risks is eliminated or minimised
- workplaces and systems of work are optimally designed with workers' health and safety in mind.

To fulfil governance responsibilities and promote their safety, it is imperative for nurses and midwives to be involved in representation, consultation, developing guiding documents, education, monitoring, reviewing and responding to workplace safety incidents and issues. The ACT Government is committed to ensuring this participation occurs. While nurses and midwives have a duty of care to their patients and clients, providing care should not compromise their safety in the workplace.

Isolated safety responses provide limited protection to staff and a coordinated organisation-wide response is necessary to effectively mitigate the risk. Accurate recording and investigation of incidences of workplace violence and aggression are required to monitor the extent of the problem, learn from incidents and improve safety measures.

Nurses and midwives, at the forefront of health care delivery, are the largest health care group exposed to Occupational Violence and Aggression (OVA).

Research suggests significant under-reporting of OVA due to multiple factors, including complex reporting systems and a culture of normalisation of OVA (Victorian Auditor General, 2015; Hogarth et al., 2016). Following on from this, estimates vary on the levels of OVA and the impact on healthcare delivery.

Objective

This Strategy provides the guidance for ACT Health to meet the requirements of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT)* and the *ACT Public Service Nursing and Midwifery Enterprise Agreement (2013-2017)* and aligns with the *ACT Health Work Health Safety Strategic Plan (2018-2022)*.

It acknowledges ACT Health has a duty of care to all workers to, as far as reasonably possible, protect the health and safety of employees and to take all measures possible to minimise the risks of harm to employees. This Strategy will provide guidance to address the key recommendations of the *Nurses and Midwives: Towards a Safer Culture – The First Step – Discussion Paper*.

Scope

ACT Health executive and frontline managers have a responsibility to develop a safe work culture in which the executive and managers have clear accountabilities for work health and safety targets which must be met and reported. Further to this, ACT Health executive and frontline managers must ensure measures are taken to implement the guidelines, policies and strategies within their areas. Nurses and midwives working in ACT public health services have an obligation to comply with the guidelines, policies and strategies outlined by ACT Health.

1. Context

Background

The ACT Government recognises the impact of OVA and occupational challenging behaviour as a global problem confronting all health care workers, and particularly nurses and midwives. Further to this, the ACT Government acknowledges the need for ongoing policy development to support contemporary, safe work practices for ACT Health employees.

As the largest employer of health care practitioners in the Territory, ACT Health is committed to meeting its obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (ACT)* and the *ACT Public Service Nursing and Midwifery Enterprise Agreement 2013-2017*.

In accordance with these obligations, and to respond to increasing incidents of workplace aggression and violence, in November 2016 the ACT Government made a commitment to

developing a nurse safety strategy in the Parliamentary Agreement for the 9th Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory. Meegan Fitzharris MLA, Minister for Health and Wellbeing, and Shane Rattenbury MLA, Minister for Mental Health initiated the development of a safety strategy for nurses and midwives, with a focus on high risk areas.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) ACT Branch has long advocated for the development and implementation of work practice guidelines and policies aimed at enhancing the safety of nurses and midwives with respect to OVA, challenging occupational behaviours and safe work practices.

2. Goal

The goal of the Strategy is to provide a safe and healthy environment; an environment where our staff and all persons who enter ACT Health workplaces are protected from harm and feel safe at all times.

3. Vision

ACT Health management and staff work together to ensure that a safe and healthy environment is our priority. We all contribute to a culture where WHS is valued in our decision making and in our day-to-day work and interactions. By providing a healthy and safe environment, staff will perform at their best.

The vision statement and key message proposed below reflects this intent and will be promoted during the delivery of this plan.

Vision statement

“We perform at our best in a safe and healthy environment.”

Key Message

“My safety ...your safety
our priority”

4. Delivering the plan

Figure 1 – Delivery Timeline and Milestones



5. Recommendations

The *Nurses and Midwives: Towards a Safer Culture – The First Step – Discussion Paper* delivered recommendations to inform the development of strategies to support the ACT Health commitment to provide a safe and healthy environment. ACT Health is committed to providing an environment where our staff and all persons who enter ACT Health workplaces are protected from harm and feel safe at all times.

The *Nurses and Midwives: Towards a Safer Culture – The First Step – Strategy* provides an action plan for addressing the recommendations. The Strategy has been broken down into four domains: Organisation Wide, Occupational Violence and Aggression, Challenging Occupational Behaviours, and Safe Work Practices.

The recommendations summarised below describe strategies to prevent, reduce and manage the exposure of ACT nurses and midwives to unsafe working environments.

Organisation Wide

- Review and strengthen governance
 - Review and strengthen workplace risk strategies, including identification, minimisation, prevention and reporting of risks
 - Promote a workplace culture of respect and staff empowerment
-

Occupational Violence and Aggression

- Develop and implement an Occupational Violence and Aggression management plan, including standards, guidelines and education
 - Develop a community, consumer and carer information campaign
-

Challenging Occupational Behaviours

- Improve leadership
 - Strengthen bullying and harassment prevention and management guidelines
 - Develop and implement workplace civility measuring and management guidelines
-

Safe Work Practices

- Embed best practice guidelines in the development of safe work practices
 - Continue to pursue safe workplace design principles in new builds and redevelopment of workplaces
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The recommendations focus on meeting the expressed needs of staff as identified through consultation.

The key recommendations identified align with the ANMF 10 Point Plan to End Violence Against Nurses (2014).

In keeping with the ACT Health core value of Excellence, high level strategic actions have been developed to address the recommendations. These strategic actions have clearly defined deliverables and success measures. Supporting these actions are the ACT Health Strategic Enablers, which are discussed in Section 7. The governance framework and key stakeholder roles are detailed in Section 8.



6. Strategic actions

Organisation Wide Actions

Proposed Actions	Deliverables	Responsible	Est. commence	Est. complete	Success Measures
1. Establish governance for the Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance document Strategy reference group Reference group Terms of Reference (ToR) 	CNMO	2018	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalised strategy governance documents Establishment of reference group Endorsement of ToR
2. Review and strengthen governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated and enhanced governance documents for nursing and midwifery 	CNMO	2018	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance materials and training circulated and promoted Inter-disciplinary, inter-directorate and inter-agency collaboration mechanisms in place to establish formalised governance to improve nurses and midwives safety
3. Implementation of WHS Strategic Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per WHS Strategic plan 	Workplace Safety	2018	DEC 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project officers and executive sponsors apply what is learned Reduction in injury/adverse events

Proposed Actions	Deliverables	Responsible	Est. commence	Est. complete	Success Measures
4. Staff engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication of governance structure • Staff forums—general and mental health • Focus groups 	CNMO	2017	JUNE 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sessions delivered • Development of key recommendations • Staff able to articulate the strategic goals, actions and desired outcomes • Staff able to identify and use risk escalation pathway
5. Clinical leadership and Leadership support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership charter • Clear leadership pathway, including clinical leadership pathway • Advisory Board sessions on leadership and change management • Strengthen leadership pathways and courses • Develop safety culture progress indicators 	CNMO	2018	JUNE 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of charter • Implementation of leadership pathway • Defined leadership pathway/training courses in place • Empowerment of leaders • Leadership in clinical practice increased • Measurement against safety culture progress indicators shows improvement
6. Ongoing review of strategy actions to ensure legislative requirements are considered and maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference group ToR • Reference group agenda and minutes • Reference group annual report • KPIs drafted and reported against 	CNMO & Working Group	2018	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of reference group • Reference Group Annual report shows achievements against the Strategy • Improvement of performance against KPIs
7. Evaluation of the Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation framework • Regular evaluation reports 	CNMO	2018	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsement of evaluation framework, including reports on

Proposed Actions	Deliverables	Responsible	Est. commence	Est. complete	Success Measures
					KPIs and evaluation discussion paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy and

Occupational Violence and Aggression

Proposed Actions	Deliverables	Responsible	Est. commence	Est. complete	Success measures
8. Development and implementation of Disruptive behaviour guideline, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence screening tool • Disruptive behaviour algorithm • Post incident evaluation tool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence screening tools • Disruptive behaviour algorithm • Post incident evaluation tool • Safewards • Education strategy • Communication strategy 	CNMO	2018	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of disruptive behaviour guideline • The use of the disruptive behaviour guideline is embedded in clinical work practice • Decreased patients escalation episodes as seen through a decrease in code black responses
9. Implementation of Safewards model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safewards implementation strategy 	CNMO	2018	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardised approach to management of patients • Decreased patients escalation episodes as seen through a decrease in code black responses • Appropriate use of seclusion and restraint in line with the Safewards model principles
10. Increased OVA visibility across organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting of all OVA incidents • Trend analysis of Riskman data and post incident evaluations • OVA data/trends included in agenda at staff meetings 	Clinicians	2018	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVA report • Staff meeting standing agenda template to include OVA

Proposed Actions	Deliverables	Responsible	Est. commence	Est. complete	Success measures
11. Target strategies to prevent OVA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using trend analysis and post incident evaluation data, develop targeted strategies 	CNMO	2018	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trend analysis reports Development of target strategies, including recommendations regarding security measures i.e. personal duress alarms and CCTV Decrease in OVA incidents
12. Post OVA follow up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalised OVA follow up pathway 	CNMO	2018	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of OVA follow up guidelines, including internal processes and referral processes Staff report sufficient follow up post OVA
13. Development of lone worker guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lone worker guidelines 	CNMO	2018	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of lone worker guidelines
14. Community awareness communication strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication strategy Patient mandate on acceptable behaviour Charter of Rights – Staff 	CNMO	2018	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased community awareness of standards of behaviours and rights of ACT Health employees

Challenging Occupational Behaviours

Proposed Actions	Deliverables	Responsible	Est. commence	Est. complete	Success Measures
15. Civility index measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt civility index measurement tool Implement civility scoring across organisation Analysis of results to further inform development of targeted strategies 	CNMO	2018	Ongoing	Civility measurement occurring across the organisation
16. Using the results of the Civility Index measurement, develop targeted strategies to improve outcomes	Variable, dependent on strategy development	CNMO	2019	DEC 2018	Improvement in Civility Index
17. Review of bullying and harassment prevention and management guidelines	Strategy as per People & Culture	People & Culture	2018	Ongoing	As per People & Culture strategy
18. Review of dispute / conflict resolution guidelines / pathway to provide greater focus on alternative management and early intervention	Strategy as per People & Culture	People & Culture	2018	Ongoing	As per People & Culture strategy

Safe Work Practices

Proposed Actions	Deliverables	Responsible	Est. commence	Est. complete	Success Measures
19. Research and develop a Ratio Framework	Ratio Framework	CNMO & ANMF	2018	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ACT Health and ANMF ACT Branch agreed • Ratio Framework developed
20. Following the work of the Ratios Framework MOU, research, develop and implement an appropriate workload management system	Workload management system	Reference Group	2020	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of a workload management system
21. Review and strengthen rostering and leave allocation guidelines to support work/life balance and minimise fatigue	Staff engagement process Rostering guidelines	Reference Group	2018	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing staff engage in consultation on rostering guidelines • Implementation of safe rostering guidelines
22. Embed safe design in all workplace designs	Safe workplace design	Health Planning Team	2018	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of AusHFG guidelines for all remodelling or new builds, incorporating safe workplace design • Nursing staff engage in key stakeholder consultation on all refurbishment and new builds • Work place designs incorporate appropriate design considerations in relation to the management of OVA

7. Strategic enablers

The following enablers are key to the success of the Strategy.

Shaping our collective mindsets and leadership behaviour needs a strong commitment from everyone who has an influence on WHS. Transparency in how leaders respond to and communicate WHS issues is important to change our safety culture. Our attitudes to the enablers will empower staff to speak up. Supporting staff to contribute their ideas to manage risk and fix local issues together will foster innovation, and share what they learn with others.



Culture and Leadership

- Shared values and a collective understanding of risk and its management.
- A proactive and collaborative approach towards goals and targets.
- Innovation and 'solutions focus' to manage risks to work health and safety.
- Commitment to safety leadership at all levels.
- Commitment to engagement with staff through respectful and genuine consultation.



Risk Communication

- 'Easy to use' management systems including policies, procedures and protocols for risk control.
- Transparency and shared information about hazards and risk control.



Continuous Improvement

- Continuous and effective monitoring by managers and staff of the workplace.
- Ensure sustainability of new improvements and identification of any new emerging risk or hazards.



Education & Competency

- Assure current competency is fit for business and compliance context.
- Identify and embed competency requirements for high risk work and hazardous activities into local area practices.

8. Governance framework and key stakeholder roles

Position/Role	Accountability and Responsibility
Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer (CNMO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall responsibility for the project development, including discussion paper, strategy and implementation plan • Ongoing monitoring of deliverables and reporting progress • Initiator of changes to the Strategy
Deputy Directors General / Executive Directors / Directors of Nursing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure appropriate resources are in place to support the implementation of this Strategy • Accountability and responsibility in respect of agreed projects, deliverables and targets
Director of Workplace Safety	Responsible for monitoring and reporting progress of WHS Strategic Plan and KPIs
Executive Directors / Directors of Nursing – Divisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor for strategic change • Leadership for strategy implementation • Responsible for KPIs within their division
Reference Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for guiding the development and monitoring the progress of the Strategy • Responsible for monitoring and reporting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Implementation Project Officers	Responsible for facilitating the implementation of the Strategy and collecting/collating performance data and KPIs
Collaborators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified business area managers with functional responsibility for endorsed actions under the Strategy • Reporting responsibility to a Lead Coordinator (as agreed).
ANMF ACT Branch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stakeholder in development and maintenance of the Strategy • Provide advocacy for and representation of nurses and midwives • Member of Reference Group

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

ACT Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. ACT Health respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. ACT Health also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.

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