

DECLARATION OF  
**NURSING AND  
MIDWIFERY  
AND UNION**

*Values*



# We are Queensland's nurses and midwives

We work in public and private hospitals, aged care facilities, local clinics and homes, in the most remote communities, and in the busiest towns in Queensland.

We care for Queenslanders from birth to death. We are a constant presence for those who are sick. We are a voice for those at their most vulnerable. We are focused on keeping people well and out of hospital.

We work collectively through our union, the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union, because we are a powerful force when we act together.

The safety and quality of the care we provide to our community is at the heart of everything we do.

Our values guide us.

Our nursing and midwifery values of caring, advocacy, holism and professionalism drive us.

Our union values of fairness, collectivism, equality and opportunity unite us.

These values are the foundation of our collective and individual activity.

We are stronger when we work together.

We work with our nursing and midwifery and union colleagues across the nation and around the world to advance our shared values and interests.

Working together through our union and more broadly in our communities to find common interests and purpose is not always easy. It requires listening and critical reflection and making decisions based on evidence. It also means having the confidence to acknowledge we don't have all the answers, having the courage to fight for what is right, and having the ability to adapt to our ever-changing world.

We must do this while remaining anchored to our defining values.

We must be creative, nimble, curious and resourceful. Recognising we have only one world, we must also live and

work sustainably and use precious resources effectively and efficiently.

We can lead the way to a sustainable health system for Australia's ageing population. The road is long, our challenges are many, and the work required spans generations – but we know with passion, perseverance and a plan we will succeed in fulfilling our mission.

We care deeply. We are courageous in our commitment to caring. Every day we stand up and speak out for what is right and necessary. We do this as individuals, with and on behalf of those in our care. We do this together, by engaging with those who have power to affect the way we provide quality care.

We seek to achieve recognition and reward not only for our own contribution as workers to our health system, but also in a wider societal context.

The quality of nursing and midwifery we provide is central to our professional integrity. We are committed to person-centred care. We show this commitment by working in partnership with our patients, clients, residents and families, as well as the broader health team whose individual contribution and skills are vital to the best interests of those in our care.

We have untapped capacity and skills. We strive for the opportunity to work to our full potential by taking the lead in decision making and the improvement of health outcomes.

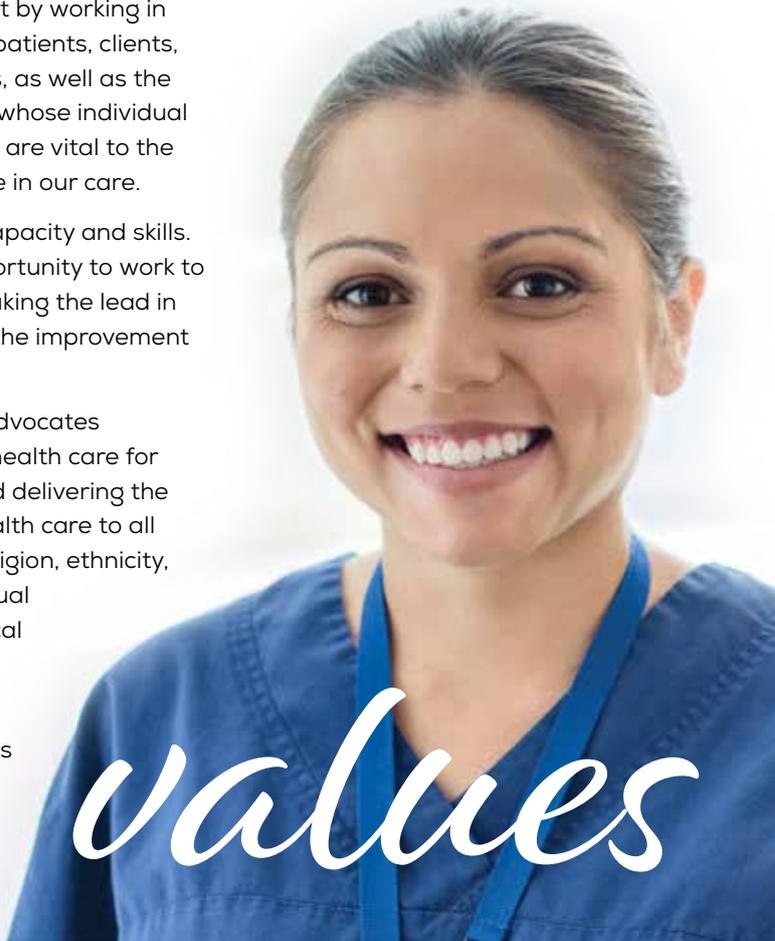
We take our role as advocates seriously, advancing health care for all based on need and delivering the same standard of health care to all regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual preference and political beliefs.

We acknowledge indigenous Australians are the original owners of our land. We are committed

to advancing reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. The diversity of a multicultural Australia is one of our defining characteristics and great strengths as a nation.

We believe in a democratic Australia, which values all citizens and their aspirations. Government plays a critical role in balancing competing interests, civilising markets, and redistributing power to support equality, fairness and opportunity. We believe all Australians have a right to a fair share of our nation's wealth and health, especially through employment and a decent standard of living.

The branch structure of our union embodies our commitment to democracy. Our governance structures are robust and of the highest standard and we operate in a manner that is transparent and accountable to our members and consistent with our values. Our union's officers, staff and workplace representatives must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this declaration of our values.



*values*



# Our nursing and midwifery *values*

## Caring



**Caring is central to our identity as nurses and midwives.**

The caring we provide is not easily described or measured and therefore is difficult to appropriately acknowledge, cost, and value. We know this caring is indispensable, knowledgeable and human. Nurses and midwives commit themselves and their expertise to the humanity and welfare of those in our care.

Nursing and midwifery transcends materialism and we do not judge those in our care. We provide dignity, comfort and hope to people when they are at their most vulnerable.

Maintaining focus on the person at the centre of care is crucial to our partnership approach to health.



## Advocacy



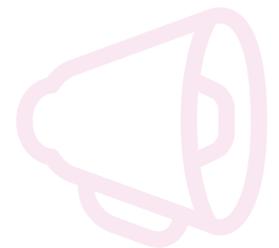
**We help to keep our health system safe.**

We advocate at the individual and whole-of-system levels.

As we work across all settings, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, we are not only coordinators of care, but also crucial navigators and interpreters of the health system for those in our care.

We have the courage to speak out when something is wrong or a situation is unsafe.

The strong link between quality nursing and midwifery and positive health outcomes shows why we take our role as advocates of person-centred care so seriously.



## Holism



**We help keep the system human.**

We do this by caring for the whole person in all settings.

We promote continuity of care and oppose approaches that seek to diminish the richness, humanity and often invisible benefits of holistic care.

Acknowledging the privileged position we hold in providing intimate care to people at their most vulnerable, we commit to acting in an ethical manner consistent with our values.

As a constant feature across all health settings we are the mainstay of the health system. We support continuity of care, delivered by the whole health team in partnership with those in our care and their families.



## Professionalism



**We are accountable to the community.**

A robust regulatory framework, codes of ethics and professional practice standards ensure the community receives high quality nursing and midwifery.

We are accountable for and have authority over our own practice. As health professionals in our own right we are autonomous and accountable for determining our roles and the safe scope of our practice.

We are committed to ensuring safety and quality remain foundations of nursing and midwifery practice through appropriate regulation.

In our daily practice, we are diverse in our response to community needs and focus on providing confident and competent evidence-based care that delivers effective and efficient solutions to health problems.





# Our union *values*

## Fairness



**We are committed to a fair society.**

Unions help achieve fairness by redistributing power and giving a voice to those who would be powerless and voiceless without the strength of collective action.

We work day in, day out to give everyone a fair go in our workplaces and our broader society.

Democratic structures and institutions in our society, including in our unions, support fairer outcomes and enhance our capacity to share the wealth of our nation more equitably.

We acknowledge the long history and ongoing struggle to achieve greater fairness, and recognise “the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” contained in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.



## Collectivism



**We are stronger when we work together.**

Guided by our common purpose and values, we know that united we stand, divided we beg.

All workers have the right to a decent wage and to fair and safe working conditions. This is best achieved by joining and being represented by a union, and by bargaining collectively.

Our union’s collective aspirations are realised through our governance and democratic processes. We take every opportunity to uphold our values and achieve our objectives through our active participation in these processes.

As nurses and midwives, we are used to working together. We understand better outcomes are achieved when shared interests are identified and challenges addressed through teamwork and collaboration.



## Equality



**We believe all people should be treated equally and have the same rights under the law.**

We strive to ensure our society is free from discrimination, harassment, intimidation and violence.

We recognise the role of unions in assisting the redistribution of power in our society to deliver greater equality.

Every Australian deserves equal access to free, quality public health care and education and other essential services, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances. We are committed to delivering the same quality of health services to all in accordance with our codes of ethics and professional standards.

Nurses and midwives have a central role to play in addressing inequity in health care by actively recognising and helping to address the social and economic determinants of health.



## Opportunity

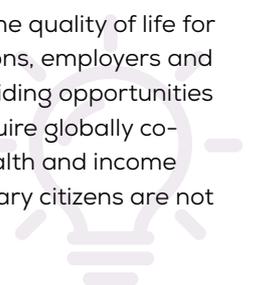


**We seek to improve the quality of life of all Australians.**

Equality of opportunity is a core element of an egalitarian society. Universal health care, equal opportunity and investment in education, progressive and equitable taxation and a fair industrial relations system coupled with access to safe, secure and meaningful work all contribute greatly to our dignity and social cohesion.

Opportunity strengthens the fabric of our society. We demonstrate our commitment to a fair society and each other by contributing as we are able. We believe the role and activities of government are central to ensuring opportunity for all.

If we are to continue to improve the quality of life for all Australians, governments, unions, employers and civil society each have a role providing opportunities to address inequality. We will require globally co-ordinated solutions to ensure wealth and income inequality is addressed and ordinary citizens are not left behind.





## Our *values* are important

Commonly held values unite us. Our values focus our activities around a common purpose, give us direction, and provide an anchor for our passion and the action we take. Defining and understanding our shared values strengthens our identity. Our values are the reason we do what we do. We know what we stand for when charting our way forward.

The values of nursing and midwifery resonate in important ways with union values because the core of our caring mission is a shared humanity.

We need to be clear and confident in our approach and base our arguments on evidence. Clarity, confidence and evidence are the tools of our activism. We challenge disadvantage to achieve greater social cohesion.

When we take a stand it is to give effect to the deeply held values that drive us.

In a democracy, we know not everyone will agree with us. We accept this truth because respect and tolerance are central to a vibrant and cohesive society.

This short declaration pulls together many decades of work and thinking into a succinct statement of what we stand for. Our union values draw on work done by the Australian and the international union movements. Our values underpin our union's strategic plan and guide all that our union does.

Times and circumstances change, so collectively and individually, we rely on critical reflection and the rigour of our union's democratic processes to ensure these values lead our work with power and relevance. This work is never ending.



## Where to from here?

As unionists we operate in a highly contested political environment – one where conflicting values and ideas constantly battle. This is very evident today where hostile governments and other powerful forces are organising not only to limit our power and influence but also discredit us, just as they have done before.

At a time of growing disillusionment with politics and institutions, we seek to succeed by making an imperfect political system responsive to our values.

The alternative to this struggle – to give up and do nothing – is not an option.

There are many facets to the ongoing struggle for power. Given nursing and midwifery remain overwhelmingly female professions, gendered assumptions and pre-conceptions continue to influence the battle of ideas in broader society and within the union movement itself.

For our strategies to succeed we need to have the confidence, knowledge and skills to act on our ideas and win

over others with the strength and evidence of our arguments.

We remain committed to our values in the long term. The changes that we seek can take many years to achieve. We need passion, perseverance and a plan to succeed. We can never assume that our achievements are permanent. We must continue to be vigilant to protect hard-won gains.

We are determined, caring, united and professional.

We are up to the challenge.



 106 Victoria St, West End Q 4101

 (07) 3840 1444 or  
1800 177 273 (toll free)

 qnmu@qnmu.org.au

 www.qnmu.org.au



/qnmuofficial

### Acknowledgement

This document draws on the following works:

- Australian Council of Trade Unions Statement of Union Values 2009
- Let's Talk Nursing Project 2006
- Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's Professional Practice Framework, including codes of ethics for nursing and midwifery