

Media statement

20 October 2016

NMBA position clear, we will take action on anti-vaccination promoters

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) and AHPRA take their responsibility of public protection very seriously, and will take regulatory action on nurses or midwives who promote anti-vaccination statements to patients and the public.

The recently published NMBA [position statement](#) follows the Board's awareness that a small number of registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives have promoted anti-vaccination statements to patients and the public via social media which contradict the best available scientific evidence. Current evidence indicates that preventative measures such as vaccination are a clinically effective public health procedure for certain viral and microbial diseases.

Chair of the NMBA, Dr Lynette Cusack said, 'The NMBA is taking this opportunity to make its expectations about providing advice on vaccinations clear to registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives. With no exceptions we expect all registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives to use the best available evidence in making practice decisions. This includes providing information to the public about public health issues.'

All registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives are required to practise in accordance with professional standards set by the NMBA, including the codes of conduct, codes of ethics and the standards for practice, in particular the social media policy and the guidelines for advertising regulated health services.

We cannot comment about these individual matters as the National Law¹ limits what we can say to protect the integrity of processes underway and any current or future action we may take.

The Board's expectations of nurses and midwives are clear

'As trusted health professionals, nurses and midwives, play a key role in helping people make decisions about their healthcare. The Board's statement makes clear its expectations of nurses and midwives when providing advice about vaccinations, 'Dr Cusack said.

The NMBA sets out its requirements for nurses and midwives in the NMBA's [Codes of professional conduct](#) which states that all nurses and midwives have a responsibility to conduct themselves personally and professionally to exemplary standards and in a way that maintains public trust and confidence in the professions.

The NMBA expects all registered nurses, enrolled nurses and midwives to use the best available evidence in making practice decisions, as set out in the [NMBA's standards for practice](#) and competency standards. This includes providing information to the public about public health issues.

The NMBA's [Social media policy](#) also provide clear guidance to nurses and midwives when using social media and is unambiguous in stating that when using social media, in any context, the National Law, the NMBA's code of ethics and code of conduct, and the [Guidelines for advertising regulated health services](#) apply.

The most important thing is that if someone has a concern they let us know

¹ Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law)

Dr Cusack continued, 'The NMBA welcomes awareness of our position statement on nurses, midwives and vaccination. For the NMBA the most important thing is that if someone has concerns about a nurse or midwife they need to let us know. When a concern is raised with the NMBA and AHPRA will review every allegation to determine whether regulatory action is required to keep the public safe.'

Anyone with concern about a registered health practitioner should contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

If the NMBA decide to take action on a nurse or midwife's registration they can issue a [caution](#), accept an [undertaking](#) or impose [conditions](#) which limit their practice in some way. If a nurse or midwife's registration is restricted, this will be published on the public [online register of practitioners](#).

The NMBA refer allegations of the most serious examples of professional misconduct to tribunals. Once a matter is referred to a tribunal it usually becomes public, and decisions are published online.

For more information

- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#)
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers)
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200