



## ANMF (Vic Branch) Policy

### Nursing and/or Midwifery Telephone advice lines

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) notes:

- Telephone Advice Lines are those which have been formally established and are specifically funded to provide nursing/midwifery staff and resources to provide telephone advice on health issues.
- Telephone Advice Lines are intended to provide advice in situations where a caller is seeking advice relating to a health issue; and/or how to access an appropriate health service for consultation and /or treatment.
- Telephone Advice Lines are not intended as a substitute for physical presentation to an appropriate health professional. for assessment and/or treatment, or calls to emergency services

### Policy

It is the policy of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) that where registered nurses/midwives are employed to provide advice or respond to any enquiries via a Telephone Advice Service, the following principles and processes are to be in place to protect both the client and the registered nurse/midwife.

The Advice line must be formally established with regard to:

- Clear lines of professional responsibility and accountability.
- Clear reporting lines through to senior nurses/midwives.
- Clear purpose and scope of practice for the registered nurse/midwife consistent with professional practice standards and established guidelines.
- Appropriate nurse/midwife staffing levels and skill mix to ensure consumer care is not compromised.
- A Minimum Data Set including an accurate record of:
  - The caller and for whom advice is being sought (child, self or other).
  - The problem as described by the caller and any advice given.
  - The time of call, and details of caller.
  - A requirement that all telephone advice is to be thoroughly documented by the registered nurse or midwife providing the advice.
  - A clear escalation policy if the caller requires referral to emergency services.
- Appropriate ergonomic location/equipment for nurses / midwives to provide the advice.
- Time spent providing Telephone Advice should be considered time worked for the purposes of breaks etc to ensure appropriate rest breaks between shifts.

The organisation policies should reflect the above requirements.

The data from the Telephone Advice Line should be secured (privacy provisions stated and complied with) including but not limited to:

1. Consent must be sought from the caller should there be a need to transmit the information to another health professional in accordance with the relevant legislative requirements.
2. Any referral must be documented appropriately, and the information collected passed on to that person as soon as practicable with confidentiality ensured as per the Privacy and Data Protection Act (2014).
3. The name of the registered nurse/midwife and a covering statement (or disclaimer) must be given to the caller that for example, *in the event of the caller having any concerns they should consult the relevant health professional, as the advice given is without physical assessment, and is therefore limited.*
4. Advice is to be based on evidence-based guidelines developed by a multi-disciplinary committee utilising the NHMRC Guidelines<sup>1</sup> process for the development of clinical practice guidelines.
5. All records must be kept in accordance with the relevant legislation.
6. Registered nurses/midwives providing advice must be given the appropriate education, including that they must give advice within their scope of practice (legislative and professional practice standards).
7. Advice guidelines protocols must be contemporary and fit for purpose and reviewed regularly.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/guidelines>