

Gender and Culture Equality

Statement of Commitment

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Workforce Extensions North Adelaide Health acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Country on which we provide care. We recognise the thousands of years of traditional healing and wisdom embedded in this land. We pay my respects to Elders past and present, and we commit to working towards a health system that is culturally safe and inclusive for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We welcome people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds and the LGBTQIA+ community.



The Vital Pulse: Why Gender Equality is Critical to Our Nursing Agency

In the Australian healthcare landscape, the concept of gender equality often evokes a simplistic focus on headcount. However, for a nursing agency such as ours—responsible for deploying staff across hospitals, aged care facilities, and rehabilitation centres—the implications run far deeper than simple statistics. While nursing remains a female-dominated profession numerically, true gender equality remains an elusive goal that impacts patient safety, staff retention, and clinical outcomes.

For our company, championing gender equality is not merely an exercise in corporate social responsibility; it is a clinical and operational necessity. It involves dismantling the "glass ceiling" for women in leadership, removing the stigma for men in nursing, and ensuring safe, inclusive environments for gender-diverse staff and patients.

Enhancing Patient Care and Safety

The primary output of our agency is care. Research consistently demonstrates that a workforce reflecting the diversity of its patient base yields better health outcomes. Gender bias in healthcare is a documented risk factor for patients; for instance, studies have shown that women's pain is often taken less seriously than men's, leading to delayed diagnoses in critical conditions like cardiac arrest (Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association, 2024).

By fostering a culture of gender equality, we train our staff to recognise and counteract these biases. Furthermore, the inclusion of men in nursing teams is not just about numbers; it is about providing diverse perspectives that can improve patient communication and comfort. Male patients, particularly in aged care or rehab settings, may sometimes feel more comfortable with male nurses for personal care, yet men make up only a small fraction of the nursing workforce (Australian College of Nursing, 2024). Promoting nursing as a viable, respected career for men and non-binary individuals expands our talent pool and directly benefits patient experience.

Addressing the "Glass Escalator" and "Glass Ceiling"

A paradox exists in nursing: while women comprise roughly 89% of the workforce, they remain underrepresented in senior leadership and decision-making roles (Monash University, 2023). Conversely, men in nursing can sometimes ride a "glass escalator," advancing more rapidly to management positions despite their lower numbers.

For our agency, equality means actively identifying high-potential female staff for leadership pathways and ensuring our male staff are valued for their clinical skills rather than fast-tracked simply because of their gender. It also involves recognising the intersectional challenges faced by our staff who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD). Migrant women, for example, often face a "double glaze" glass ceiling, encountering barriers related to both gender and cultural background (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2024). Recognising and supporting these employees is vital for a robust, resilient workforce.

The Economic and Business Case

From a business perspective, the case for gender equality is irrefutable. The nursing shortage in Australia is a critical challenge. By limiting our recruitment focus or failing to support work-life balance—which disproportionately affects women due to unpaid care responsibilities—we restrict our operational capacity.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) highlights that the healthcare sector still contends with a gender pay gap, often driven by the concentration of men in higher-paid specialist or administrative roles and women in lower-paid care roles (WGEA, 2024). By auditing our own pay structures and advocating for fair remuneration for all our agency staff, we improve retention. Staff who feel valued and treated fairly are less likely to leave, reducing the immense cost and logistical burden of constant recruitment.



For our nursing agency, gender equality is the tide that lifts all boats. It empowers our female staff to lead, encourages men to care, and protects our gender-diverse employees. Most importantly, it saves lives by ensuring our patients receive care that is free from bias. As we continue to supply staff to the frontline of Australian health, our commitment to equality must be as unwavering as our commitment to clinical excellence.



Our Commitment to Gender and Cultural Equality in Healthcare Staffing

In the dynamic landscape of Australian healthcare, nursing agencies play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between workforce supply and the critical needs of hospitals, aged care facilities, and rehabilitation centres. As an organisation operating within this vital sector, our responsibility extends beyond merely filling shifts; we are custodians of a workplace culture that directly impacts patient outcomes. Our company's commitment to gender and cultural equality is not just a regulatory compliance measure—it is the ethical foundation upon which we build a resilient, empathetic, and world-class workforce.

Championing Cultural Diversity in a Multicultural Nation

Australia's healthcare system is one of the most culturally diverse in the world. With nearly half of the Australian population born overseas or having at least one parent born overseas, it is imperative that our nursing workforce reflects the communities we serve. As a nursing agency, we recognise the immense value that Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) staff bring to the clinical environment.

Migrant nurses and care staff contribute not only clinical expertise but also unique cultural competencies that enhance patient trust and communication. For instance, research indicates that when care providers understand a patient's cultural background—whether it be dietary customs, spiritual practices, or language—clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction improve significantly. We are proud to support a workforce where a significant proportion of staff may have begun their nursing journey in countries such as India, the Philippines, Nepal, or China, before bringing their skills to the Australian health sector.

Our commitment involves actively combatting the "accent discrimination" that can unfortunately occur in clinical settings. We advocate for a workplace where professional skills are valued above linguistic assimilation, ensuring that staff who speak English as a second language are supported and respected. By fostering an environment of cultural safety, we ensure that our staff feel safe to bring their whole selves to work, which in turn allows them to provide culturally safe care to patients.

Bridging the Gender Gap in Healthcare

While the healthcare and social assistance sector is the largest employer of women in Australia, it paradoxically continues to face significant gender equity challenges. Data from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) highlights that despite women making up approximately 80% of the healthcare workforce, a gender pay gap persists, particularly in senior leadership and specialist medical roles.

Our agency is committed to addressing these systemic imbalances through transparent and equitable recruitment policies. We ensure that gender does not dictate opportunity, remuneration, or career progression. This involves a dual approach: empowering women to step into leadership and higher-acuity clinical roles, while simultaneously encouraging and normalising the presence of men in nursing—a profession historically viewed through a gendered lens.

We recognise that gender equality also means supporting the work-life balance of our staff, many of whom carry disproportionate caring responsibilities at home. By offering flexible rostering and advocating for fair conditions across the facilities we service, we aim to retain highly skilled nurses who might otherwise leave the profession due to rigid working structures.

A Safe Harbour for the LGBT Community

True equality cannot exist without the full inclusion of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and diverse (LGBT) community. In the healthcare sector, LGBT individuals—both staff and patients—have historically faced invisibility and discrimination. As an agency, we stand firm in our support for LGBT inclusion.

This commitment translates into practical actions: using inclusive language in our internal communications, respecting preferred names and pronouns, and ensuring our anti-discrimination policies are robust and actively enforced. We understand that an inclusive workplace is a safer



workplace. When our LGBT staff feel supported and visible, they are better equipped to advocate for LGBT patients, ensuring that vulnerable individuals in nursing homes and hospitals receive care that is free from judgement and prejudice.

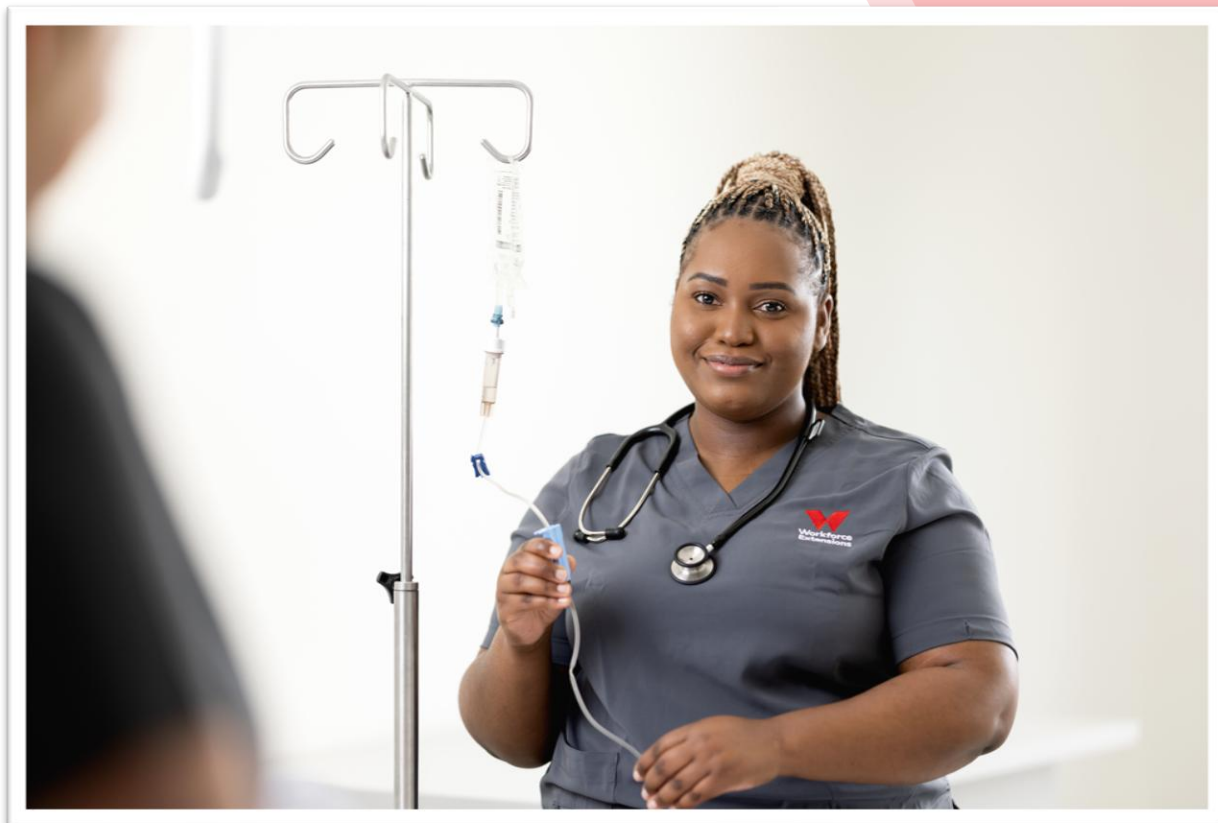
Our company's dedication to gender and cultural equality is a continuous journey rather than a destination. It requires constant vigilance, the willingness to listen to diverse voices, and the courage to challenge outdated norms. By fostering a workforce that celebrates the rich tapestry of cultures, genders, and identities that make up modern Australia, we do more than just improve our company culture; we elevate the standard of care for every patient our staff encounters. In doing so, we affirm that in healthcare, compassion knows no borders, and excellence has no gender.



Workforce Diversity Summary

At Workforce Extensions North Adelaide Health, our active workforce is defined by its significant diversity, comprising 70% female and 23% male employees, alongside 2% staff members who identify as non-binary or gender diverse, and 5% who have exercised their choice not to disclose their gender.

We are a staunch advocate for the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, fostering an inclusive environment where disclosure is voluntary yet supported; currently, 5 of our staff members have publicly identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community.



Furthermore, our team reflects a rich tapestry of cultural backgrounds, with recent census data indicating that 85% of our employees come from non-English speaking backgrounds, a diversity that strengthens our capacity to provide culturally competent care.

1.5% of our employee identifies themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

We encourage applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from CALD backgrounds, and the LGBTQIA+ community. Explicitly stating that uniforms are gender-neutral or that cultural attire (e.g., hijabs) is supported provided it meets infection control standards.

Workforce Extensions North Adelaide health also acknowledging the cultural leave/flexibility for significant days that are not public holidays, such as Lunar New Year, Eid or Diwali.

Workforce Extensions North Adelaide Health strictly adheres to an Equal Pay for Equal Work philosophy. We guarantee that all employees with equivalent work experience, qualifications, and skills receive the same hourly rates and allowances, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, age, or cultural background.



Statement of Commitment: Zero Tolerance for Discrimination

At Workforce Extensions North Adelaide Health, we recognise that the foundation of excellent healthcare is respect. Today, we are reinforcing our commitment to safety and inclusion by issuing our updated Zero Tolerance Policy against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying.

As a nursing agency serving the Australian community, we acknowledge the diversity of both our workforce and the patients we care for. Consequently, we are taking a firm stance to eliminate discrimination based on gender identity, sexuality, and cultural background.

Why this matters: Discrimination and bullying are known workplace hazards that compromise patient safety and staff wellbeing. We are committed to upholding the standards set by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA), which mandates culturally safe and respectful practice.

Key aspects of our policy include:

- **Clear Definitions:** We have explicitly defined what constitutes discriminatory behaviour, sexual harassment, and cultural vilification so there is no ambiguity.
- **Individual Responsibility:** Every nurse, midwife, and staff member is responsible for fostering an inclusive environment.
- **Accountability:** We have outlined clear consequences for breaches of this policy, ranging from disciplinary action to reporting to relevant regulatory bodies.

Workforce Extensions North Adelaide Health is dedicated to leading by example. We believe that by protecting our staff and patients from discrimination, we contribute to a stronger, healthier nursing industry.

Legislative compliance

At workforce Extensions North Adelaide Health, we strictly adhere or allude below and relevant legal frameworks:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Aged Care Quality Standards (specifically Standard 1: Consumer Dignity and Choice)



Zero Tolerance to Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to unequivocally state Workforce Extensions North Adelaide Health's commitment to providing a workplace and service environment that is safe, inclusive, and respectful for all people.

We hold a zero-tolerance stance regarding discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying based on gender, sexuality, culture, race, or any other protected attribute. This applies to how our staff treat one another, and crucially, how our staff treat patients, residents, and colleagues within the healthcare facilities we serve.

2. Legislative Framework & Standards

This policy is underpinned by Commonwealth and State legislation and professional standards, including but not limited to:

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)

Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) Code of Conduct for Nurses (specifically Principle 3: Cultural Practice and Respectful Relationships).

3. Policy Statement

Workforce Extensions North Adelaide Health does not accept any form of discrimination or harassment.

3.1 Gender and Sexuality (LGBTQIA+ Inclusion) We are committed to gender equality and the safety of the LGBTQIA+ community. No employee or patient shall be treated less favourably due to their sex, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.

We support the use of preferred pronouns and names.

We prohibit derogatory language, "jokes," or intrusive questions regarding a person's private life or orientation.

3.2 Cultural and Racial Safety We value the diversity of our workforce and the multicultural Australian community we serve.

We strictly prohibit racial vilification, mocking of accents, or discrimination based on ethnic origin, migration status, or religion.

As healthcare providers, our staff must practice Cultural Safety, ensuring that personal biases do not compromise the quality of care provided to patients from diverse backgrounds.

4. Definitions

Direct Discrimination: Treating a person less favourably than another person in a similar situation because of a protected attribute (e.g., refusing shifts to a nurse because of their background).

Indirect Discrimination: Putting in place a rule or policy that applies to everyone but disadvantages a particular group (e.g., a uniform policy that unnecessarily restricts religious attire).

Sexual Harassment: Any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours, or conduct of a sexual nature where a reasonable person would anticipate the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated, or intimidated.

Vilification: A public act that incites hatred, severe contempt, or severe ridicule towards a person or group.



5. Responsibilities

5.1 Management Responsibilities

Model inclusive behaviour at all times.

Take immediate, serious action on any reports of discrimination.

Ensure all staff (including casual agency pool staff) are aware of this policy during induction.

5.2 Employee (Agency Staff) Responsibilities

Treat all colleagues, facility staff, and patients with dignity.

Comply with the NMBA Code of Conduct regarding respectful relationships.

Report any incidents of discrimination they witness (bystander intervention).

5.3 Client Interactions (Hospitals/Aged Care Facilities)

If an agency nurse experiences discrimination from a client facility's staff or a patient, they must report it to [Agency Name] management immediately. We will advocate for our staff and address the issue with the client facility.

Conversely, if a client facility reports that one of our agency nurses has engaged in discriminatory behaviour, we will launch an immediate internal investigation.

6. Complaints Procedure

Workforce Extensions North Adelaide Health encourages the reporting of behaviour that breaches this policy.

Informal Resolution: If safe to do so, inform the offender that the behaviour is unwelcome and offensive.

Formal Complaint: Submit a written complaint to Marie Caperna or Michelle Majder.

Investigation: The matter will be investigated impartially, confidentially, and in a timely manner.

Protection from Victimisation: It is unlawful to victimise or disadvantage a person because they have made a complaint. Any employee found to be victimising a complainant will face disciplinary action.

7. Consequences of Breach

Any breach of this policy is considered serious misconduct. Outcomes may include:

Formal written warning.

Mandatory training/counselling.

Termination of employment or cancellation of agency contract.

Where applicable, notification to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) if the conduct poses a risk to public safety or constitutes professional misconduct.



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