

Information for members using social media to share ANMF content

Social media is a wonderful communication tool, but we need to remember that our online activity can impact our work lives. Although we may only intend our online activity to reach a certain audience, including taking steps around privacy settings, any information we post online can be circulated into the public domain - including to our employers or regulatory bodies.

All nurses, midwives and carers need to be mindful that workplace Codes of Conduct and the values within, may well apply to your social media use. Mentioning your place of work, posting a photo in a logo identified uniform, or anything that links your online presence to your workplace, increases the possibility that your employer will expect compliance with their Code of Conduct, or in some workplaces specific Social Media Policy, regarding any online activity you post, share, comment on, or 'like'. Additionally, laws relating to privacy and telecommunications need to be observed.

Examples of problems that have arisen include:

- Making disparaging remarks about your organisation, patients/clients or fellow employees.
- Making comments that may embarrass your organisation (for example, airing grievances – both professional and industrial and, in some instances, personal).
- Identifying patients or posting information that may lead to the identification of a patient in your care.

If a person takes exception to what you have posted, commented, or shared on social media, you may risk being reported to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), where such notifications may be referred to the NMBA for decision. Although this may feel as though nurses and midwives are never truly “off duty”, the need to uphold our ethical and regulatory responsibilities remains when we interact online – just as it does when we interact in person.

Posting photos of patients or clients in your care or photos of colleagues posted without their consent can lead to issues, including termination of your employment and disciplinary action. Issues can also arise when ‘sharing’ other people’s social media posts, online articles, or even news stories. If for example, a news website runs a negative story on its website regarding your workplace, your sharing the article may imply you agree with it, and furthermore, if your workplace is identified on your social media in some way, your sharing of the article could be seen as an ‘insider expert’ endorsement of the article.

When the ANMF makes posts to social media, we do this being mindful of the above concerns. We do encourage you to share our stories on your social media accounts, but we do advise that you do not add your own commentary if it may breach the above.

A general rule of thumb with social media is do not write anything that you wouldn’t be happy seeing shared publicly. Yes, we may share amusing stories and pictures regarding our own lives, but if you feel that if your employer or the NMBA saw your post, they may be concerned, don’t post it.

Our nurses, midwives and carers do amazing work, and a small amount of caution when using social media goes a long way to that fantastic work continuing!

