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## **New service offers helping hand for nurses and midwives**

Health support for nurses and midwives is only a phone call or click away, thanks to a new national service.

Launched today, Nurse & Midwife Support (NM Support) is the first national dedicated telephone and online service that provides confidential advice and referral to nurses and midwives about their health and wellbeing.

NM Support is a Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) initiative and is run independently by Turning Point, a leading addiction treatment, research and education organisation.

Callers to the service have 24/7 access to an experienced team who can provide advice and referral to nurses and midwives on a wide range of health and wellbeing related issues. The service also offers support to nursing and midwifery students, educators, employers and concerned family members.

Turning Point Program Director Anthony Denham said that while nurses and midwives are recognised as the caregivers, they can also face health challenges and need support in getting care. "This may include stress caused by work, family problems, relationship issues, as well as alcohol and drug related issues, or mental health concerns," Mr Denham said.

The service was established following an NMBA research project on health issues for nurses and midwives, which conducted evidence reviews and extensive stakeholder consultation, including a survey sent to every nurse and midwife in Australia.

Of the 10 000 nurses and midwives who participated in the research nationally, many said that they had either experienced a health issue themselves or witnessed their colleagues dealing with one. The consultation also revealed that many nurses and midwives were concerned that the only available option was to seek help through formally notifying their employer.

Most nurses and midwives who took part in the NMBA consultation believed that current health support services could be improved, and many were unaware of the available mental health, drug and alcohol support services that could provide help if they needed it.

"This service is all about providing anonymous, 'no strings attached' support that helps nurses and midwives deal with health issues that may be affecting their personal lives and their work," Mr Denham said.

He continued, "I would encourage any nurse or midwife who needs our help to call us for free today. Put our support number in your phone so it is there if you ever need it. You are not alone – help is available."

Associate Professor Lynette Cusack, Chair of the NMBA and a registered nurse, said that it was important that nurses and midwives had access to health support wherever they were in Australia.

“The NMBA is supporting nurses and midwives to continue to provide safe, quality care to the public – whether they are based in a city or in a rural or remote location. Confidential support is now just a free phone call away.”

Mark Aitken, who is a registered nurse working for NM Support, said the educational element of the service will help to better inform those working in health service settings on how to support colleagues who might be facing health issues and help them address those concerns.

“Prevention is better than cure, and it is important that we continue to work hard to destigmatise the need for any nurse or midwife in Australia to ask for help. By providing support for our caregivers, nurses and midwives can continue to provide care to the community – and that means more positive healthcare experiences.”

The service is now available across Australia and is open to nurses, midwives, students, employers, educators, concerned friends or relatives and the public.

To access NM Support, call **1800 667 877** or visit **[www.nmsupport.org.au](http://www.nmsupport.org.au)**

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