



# Submission to

Senate Standing Committees on Rural and  
Regional Affairs and Transport

*The provision of rescue, firefighting and  
emergency response at Australian airports*

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submission

## Introduction

The Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union (QNMU) thanks the Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport (the committees), for the opportunity to comment on the *provision of rescue, firefighting and emergency response at Australian airports*.

Nursing and midwifery is the largest occupational group in Queensland Health and one of the largest across the Queensland government. The QNMU is the principal health union in Queensland covering all classifications of workers that make up the nursing workforce including registered nurses (RN), registered midwives (RM), enrolled nurses (EN) and assistants in nursing (AIN) who are employed in the public, private and not-for-profit health sectors including aged care.

Our more than 60,000 members work across a variety of settings from single person operations to large health and non-health institutions, and in a full range of classifications from entry level trainees to senior management. The vast majority of nurses and midwives in Queensland are members of the QNMU.

In our submission, the QNMU has responded to one term of reference - *(b) the standards for the provision of emergency response at Australian airports, including emergency medical response and response to structure fires and other incidents*.

When considering the standards for the emergency medical response at Australian airports we ask the committees to consider pandemic emergencies. We acknowledge that airports will already have plans in place for pandemic emergencies. However, having a unified approach will ensure all nurses, health practitioners, airline and airport staff and other personnel are being taught the same standards.

The World Health Organization (2010) states "a pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease". Airports contribute to the potential spread of disease due to the large number of people in an enclosed environment with high contact rates and several hand touch surfaces (Kulmala, 2017).

As part of all airport emergency management planning, a pandemic emergency plan must be developed which includes a preparedness plan that identifies roles and responsibilities of all relevant parties. Efficient airport pandemic control plans and governance are vital in ensuring the spread of person-to-person transmissible pathogens is mitigated.

In the event of a pandemic emergency at airports, nurses and other healthcare practitioners will be called on for assistance. Careful planning and preparation of this emergency at

airports will ensure the safety of our members, other health practitioners and the public. The QNMU asks the committees to consider the inclusion of pandemic emergencies in the review of emergency responses at Australian airports.

## References

Kulmala, I. (2017). Tackling the spread of pathogens in airports. *International Airport Review*, 2. Retrieved from <https://www.internationalairportreview.com/article/33571/tackling-spread-pathogens-airports/>

World Health Organization. (2010). *Emergencies preparedness, response*. Retrieved from [https://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently\\_asked\\_questions/pandemic/en/](https://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently_asked_questions/pandemic/en/)