



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

General Secretary: Brett Holmes | Assistant General Secretary: Judith Kiejda

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Public forum to discuss Stockton Centre closure and privatisation of disability services

Hundreds of people will gather at Newcastle Panthers this evening to discuss the O'Farrell Government's plans to privatise all state disability services and shut down the Stockton Centre.

Local residents of the publically run care centre, nurses, carers and family members have called on the government to explain how it intends to maintain the level of highly skilled staff and expertise when it shifts disability services over to the non-government sector.

General Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), Brett Holmes, said the lack of real consultation and consideration of needs of the disabled and their carers had been distressing for residents and nurses.

"The O'Farrell Government has a duty of care to uphold and its disregard for the wellbeing of local residents, their families and nursing staff at the Stockton Centre is abhorrent," Mr Holmes said.

"Highly skilled nurses and carers have been running the residential centres across Newcastle and the state for decades, now the government is giving them to non-government organisations with no known accountability or quality assurances."

Tonight will be an opportunity for the Newcastle community to hear from a panel of experts regarding the O'Farrell Government's plans, including the impact privatisation will have on local disability care services. Mr Holmes will be joined on the panel by Ms Kate Washington, a solicitor at Catherine Henry Partners, Mr Gary Dunne, a RN Disability Nurse of 34 years and family spokespeople.

"Residents of the Stockton Centre and their families should have the right to choose the care that best meets their needs, rather than being forced into the unknown," said Mr Holmes.

"Thousands of vital nursing jobs across NSW are at risk as a result of the O'Farrell Government's privatisation plans, with no assurances current public sector pay and conditions would be offered by private agencies.

"We are determined to fight this on behalf of our members to ensure the fairness, respect and dignity they deserve.

"Many of our members have dedicated their life long careers to providing professional care to the most disabled members of our community and they have pledged to do all that is within their power to make sure that their clients continue to have access to the high standards of care they deserve.

"We are calling on the people of the Hunter to be informed of what is happening to these people – both the staff and the residents – and to stand with them to make sure governments are not allowed to wash their hands of the responsibility of providing for the most needy, by simply making it someone else's problem, rather than being held accountable themselves.



“It’s too easy for governments to say the non-government sectors can do it and then decades later find out at a Royal Commission that it didn’t quite work out so well,” Mr Holmes said.

The public forum will be held at Newcastle Panthers, Auditorium Two, 309 King Street, Newcastle from 6pm, Tuesday 11 March 2014. Media are welcome to attend.

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