Court of Appeal decision hurts hardworking nurses and midwives

Nurses, midwives and other public sector workers across the State have been dealt a nasty blow, after the NSW Court of Appeal overturned a decision regarding a 2.5 per cent salary increase.

In 2013, the Industrial Relations Commission awarded nurses, midwives and other public sector employees a 2.5 per cent award increase, in addition to the federally legislated 0.25 per cent increase in their superannuation entitlements.

In the Court of Appeal yesterday the decision to exclude superannuation from the 2.5 per cent salary increase was overturned.

General Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), Brett Holmes, said it was a devastating outcome for public sector workers, including many NSWNMA members.

“As a result, the NSW government’s promised 2.5 per cent wage policy now becomes a 2.27 per cent wage policy,” Mr Holmes said.

“With everyday costs of living continuing to rise, it’s very disappointing that nurses, midwives and other public sector workers face the prospect of real wage losses over time, unless they are prepared to trade off their existing conditions to ‘pay’ for their own wage increases.

“The ultimate impact from this is it has allowed the Baird Government to determine bargaining and wage outcomes for public sector workers.

“Continued poor pay outcomes which fail to recognise increased productivity, workloads and responsibility will return nurses and midwives to the bad old days of nurses and midwives leaving the profession to use their skills elsewhere.

“Health Workforce Australia already predicts a serious shortfall of nurses by 2025 and decisions like these do nothing to address the issue.

“Nurses, midwives and other public sector workers will be forced to pay for any improvements to superannuation in the future. Good employers don’t deduct superannuation contributions from pay increases that amount to no more than minimum cost of living expenses.”

Mr Holmes said the state government had taken away the rights of public sector workers to bargain.

He continued: “Short-term budget solutions will have longer term consequences when the government finds it is having difficulties recruiting and retaining professional nurses and midwives in the future.”
Union affiliates representing public sector employees will meet next week to consider the decision.

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