



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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Concerns remain for nurses and midwives' penalty rates

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) fears the battle for penalty rates and attacks on the minimum wage are far from over, following today's release of the Productivity Commission's draft report into workplace relations.

Despite recommending penalty rates be maintained for essential services, alarmingly, the Productivity Commission has failed to identify whether nurses employed throughout the aged care sector are shielded.

The Productivity Commission singled out the hospitality, entertainment and retail sectors, recommending that Sunday penalty rates be reduced, which would result in an unfair two-tier wages system.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said the Productivity Commission's draft recommendations were akin to the calm before the storm, with the Abbott Government likely to adopt an incremental approach, chipping away at penalty rates until they are abolished.

"It might be the shop assistants' or baristas' penalty rates under attack today, but it won't be long before nurses and midwives' penalty rates are under threat once again," Mr Holmes said.

"The Abbott Government has form on breaking pre-election promises and the battle is far from over on penalty rates, the minimum wage and attacks on workers' rights.

"We will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with workers in other industries in fighting for their penalty rates and recognition for working unsociable hours that others often take for granted."

Mr Holmes said another draft recommendation to remove restrictions around individual flexibility arrangements had the potential to impact upon nurses and midwives' penalty rates and many other conditions of employment.

"The draft recommendation advocates a free-for-all removal of current protections for workers who are offered individual agreements - a surefire method to encourage a backdoor removal of penalty rates," Mr Holmes said.

Mr Holmes also raised concerns over the draft recommendation to tamper with minimum wage indexation.

"This is a particularly worrying draft recommendation for our assistants in nursing (AiN), who play an integral role within the aged care workforce," Mr Holmes said.

"Some of our AiNs are paid only the minimum wage and rely on these increases to help them make ends meet as costs of living continue to rise. It would be extremely devastating to AiNs if minimum wage growth was frozen."

The NSWNMA has vowed to continue campaigning in the community and lobbying federal MPs, including crossbench Senators, throughout NSW to ensure nurses and midwives' concerns are heard loud and clear over any attacks on workers' rights, the minimum wage and penalty rates.



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