



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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30 years old: too young to die - Nurses and midwives fight to save Medicare

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Acting General Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), Judith Kiejda, will today celebrate the 30th anniversary of Medicare's existence along with other community leaders, health workers and supporters.

"This Saturday marks 30 years of one of Australia's greatest achievements," Ms Kiejda said.

"Medicare has been with us for half a lifetime and Australians value it above nearly any other creation of government. As the saying goes: 'It works. It's fair. It's Medicare'.

"That captures beautifully why we love Medicare. It's equally fair to every Australian - rich or poor, pensioner or school kid, young professional or suburban mum.

"And it works perfectly well. Australians love their Medicare card - it lets them sleep easy at nights.

"We can all see a doctor or go to hospital when whenever we need to, even if we are broke.

"That's because we've already paid for that critical privilege with the levy on every dollar we earn. We pay it gladly because not one Australian ever faces the ghastly choice others confront around the world - the choice to forego medical care for us or our kids because we don't have the money to spare that week.

"It makes us one of the most modern, civilized and fair nations on earth," Ms Kiejda said.

Ms Kiejda was speaking at a 'birthday party' for Medicare put on by Unions NSW, the ACTU and the NSWNMA to celebrate the anniversary - but also to sound a warning against attacks on Medicare as Australians have come to know it and depend on it.



“Already we have had calls to begin dismantling this critical safety net from individuals who look remarkably like stooges and stalking horses for the dark intentions of the new Federal Government,” Ms Kiejda said.

“So called ‘co-payments’ simply mean that if you don’t have the money, you can’t see the doctor - even if it may save your life. You can call it a ‘co-payment’ but it really means ‘no payment, no medical care’.

“What you can’t call it is Medicare. Make no mistake - measures like these are the death knell of Medicare if the Government brings them in. And all their signals say they are planning just that - unless we make enough noise to change their minds.

“For almost the whole past 30 years no political party has mentioned scrapping Medicare, because they understood that voters would not tolerate it. But now there is a new adventurism among some conservative extremists.

“It’s up to all of us to fight loud and long to make these vandals realise that Medicare is cherished by every parent, every pensioner, every Australian who cares about living in a decent and fair modern society.

“And woe betide the politician or government who tries to take that away from us,” Ms Kiejda said.

The ‘Medicare Turns 30’ event will be held at Unions NSW atrium, 377-383 Sussex Street, Haymarket at 11.15am, Wednesday 29 January, 2014. Press welcome.

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