



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

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

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15 February, 2014

## Save Medicare Rally

### Embargoed until 5.00am, 15 February, 2014

General Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), Brett Holmes, will today join nurses and midwives, labour leaders and other public health advocates at a rally to defend Australia's public health, hospital and Medicare system from a multi-pronged attack by recently elected conservative governments.

The rally will be at Sydney Town Hall at 1.00pm today.

"We need all Australians to be crystal clear about what is going on here. We are witnessing the first stages of 'death by a thousand privatisations' of the public health and Medicare system Australians hold so dear," Mr Holmes said.

"Our public health care system built up over decades and trusted by Australian families to deliver crucial care in times of crisis is under attack at every level of government.

"Within a couple of months of taking office, the Abbott government in Canberra is floating ideas about destroying Medicare as we know it. So called 'co-payments' to see a doctor simply mean some families will have to choose between taking a sick child to the GP or other essentials like groceries or household bills.

"We all pay our Medicare levy on the promise of medical care whenever we or our families need it. It's a promise set to be broken - now all at risk from ideologues who have always hated our great public health system because it's not a profit machine for big business.

"In NSW we are seeing every new public hospital or health facility being gifted to private operators for profit. It is truly scandalous," Mr Holmes said.

Mr Holmes nominated the O'Farrell Government's plan to hand the new 'public' hospital to be built at Frenchs Forest over to private operators to run for profit for 20 years as the leading example.

"But that's just the beginning. In the Hunter Valley, a promised new hospital at Metford is heading the same way. O'Farrell Government ministers refuse to rule out giving it too away to large private health corporations to exploit for profit.

"They have already announced the full privatisation of disability care in NSW and right across the state we are seeing new mental health facilities quietly being handed over to non-government operators.



“These are surely the most vulnerable two groups of health care clients in our society and they are being treated as fodder for business,” Mr Holmes said.

He urged nurses and midwives and all who want to defend our great tradition of first rate public health care available to all Australians, and our universal health insurance we call Medicare, to join the rally and continue campaigning.

“Privatisation is the slow death of our public system, make no mistake, just as ‘co-payments’ are the death knell of Medicare,” Mr Holmes said.

“Nothing matters more to most Australians. We must fight to defend affordable health care for our families from the forces that would turn it all into an American-style profit machine,” Mr Holmes said.

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MEDIA CONTACT: Brett Holmes 0414 550 324