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CUTTING PENALTY RATES WILL HARM HEALTHCARE

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) is warning the Abbott Government that stripping away nurses' penalty rates and other allowances would compromise the healthcare provided to all Australians.

The Acting Federal Secretary of the ANMF, Annie Butler, said penalty rates and shift loadings comprise a significant portion of a Registered Nurse (RN) or Midwife's actual remuneration as a result of their 24/7 rosters they work to keep the health system going.

"Nursing and midwifery is an around the clock profession. Day or night, people expect to have a nurse there," Ms Butler said today.

"Therefore it's only fair that nurses and midwives are fairly compensated for working these hours, on weekends, public holidays and special days like Christmas, when they leave their own families and friends to care for others.

"Penalty rates and shift loadings make up to 40 per cent of a Registered Nurse (RN) or Midwife's actual remuneration – cutting them would mean a massive reduction in their minimum wage."

Ms Butler said the ANMF and its members were concerned the Productivity Commission's Review of Fair Work Laws could see a return to the "dreaded WorkChoices".

"Australia has a growing shortage of qualified nurses, but how can we expect to recruit and, most importantly, retain nurses, if Mr Abbott now wants to rob them of their penalty rates and other allowances? It's ludicrous," she said.

"We'll see more and more of our highly-trained nursing and midwifery workforce walk away from the profession they love. And ultimately, the quality healthcare they can deliver to Australians at all hours of the day and night, will be seriously compromised as a consequence. The ANMF is warning Mr Abbott that penalty rates and other allowances are critical issues for our members – and they'll fight to save them."

The ANMF, with over 240,000 members, is the professional and industrial voice for nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing in Australia.

ANMF media inquiries: 0411 254 390.