



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

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

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## Attack on penalty rates prompts strike action

Members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) will participate in coordinated industrial action on Wednesday (4 March), as part of a union-led national day of action.

Hundreds of nurses and midwives will take to the streets in Sydney and Newcastle to highlight their opposition to the Federal Government's attacks on workers' rights, Medicare and social safety nets for those most vulnerable in society.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, confirmed the nurses and midwives felt compelled to act as a result of the Productivity Commission's latest inquiry into all aspects of working conditions and the threat it poses to penalty rates, the minimum wage and a return of unfair individual contracts.

"Our members firmly believe in the need to protect the rights of workers who are required to be on shift during unsociable hours and to ensure they are paid fairly," said Mr Holmes.

"Working afternoons, nights and weekends puts enormous physical and social strains on shift workers and not everyone is capable of these demands – the idea that nurses and midwives will continue to work these shifts with no compensation is ludicrous.

"Attacks like these on penalty rates are a direct attack on nurses and midwives' right to fair pay and conditions, regardless of where they are employed throughout the health and aged care sectors.

"Cuts to penalty rates could mean a cut in take home pay by up to 30 per cent for nurses and midwives working shifts.

"What the Productivity Commission inquiry and the Federal Government is considering, which could deliver cuts to penalty rates, is an outrageous act to punish high-skilled nursing and midwifery staff by removing their incentive to work and contribute to society."

Up to 22 NSWNMA workplace branches across the state voted to endorse the coordinated stop work action and have notified Local Health District management of their intentions to enable alternative work arrangements.

"Our members take any action, such as walking off the job, extremely seriously given their commitment to putting patient safety first at all times," said Mr Holmes.

"As always, nurses and midwives are committed to ensuring emergency care and life-preserving services will be provided at each site during the strike action and skeleton staffing is maintained, equivalent to night duty staffing levels."

NSWNMA branches set to take part in the national day of action include:

Bankstown Hospital  
Blacktown Hospital

Manning Base Hospital  
Mount Druitt Hospital



Canterbury Hospital  
Bulli District Hospital  
Cessnock Correctional Centre Justice Health  
Coledale District Hospital  
Concord Hospital  
Concord Centre for Mental Health  
Gosford Hospital  
Liverpool Hospital  
Liverpool Mental Health

Nepean Hospital  
Port Kembla Hospital  
Prince of Wales Hospital  
Prince of Wales Mental Health  
Royal North Shore Hospital  
Royal Prince Alfred Hospital  
Stockton Centre  
Westmead Hospital  
Wollongong Hospital

Off-duty nurses from Blue Mountains District Hospital; Manly Hospital; Mona Vale Hospital; Ryde Hospital and Shellharbour Hospital branches will also participate in the Sydney rally.

Nurses and midwives in rural and regional areas, who are unable to attend rallies in Sydney and Newcastle, will conduct localised activities during their work breaks in a show of support. These branches include Cootamundra Hospital; Cowra District Hospital; Lockhart and District Hospital; Murrumburrah-Harden District Hospital; Tweed Hospital; Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and Northern Central Coast (Wyong).

***Media Alert: On Wednesday 4 March 2015, NSWNMA members will gather at Hyde Park North from 12.00pm and march to Parliament House in Macquarie Street, Sydney where they will join the National Day of Action from 12.30pm.***

***In Newcastle, NSWNMA members will join a National Day of Action rally outside Newcastle City Hall from 10.00am on Wednesday 4 March.***

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