



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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13 March, 2015

Inner West supports need to keep RNs in aged care 24/7

A passionate crowd of aged care advocates gathered at West Ashfield on Wednesday night (11 March), to discuss the future of registered nurse staffing in the aged care sector with the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA).

Over recent months, the NSWNMA has been raising awareness of the potential risk to legislation which requires nursing homes across the state to be staffed with registered nurses, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, addressed the community forum and explained the current law, which requires nursing homes in NSW to have a registered nurse on duty at all times and the appointment of a director of nursing.

"NSW is the only state or territory in Australia which has this requirement but it is vital to ensure the delivery of safe care of all residents in these aged care settings," Mr Holmes said.

"Unfortunately, due to a change in the federal law last year, the NSW government must now decide whether or not to retain that requirement.

"Registered nurses in nursing homes often prevent unnecessary trips to emergency departments or prolonged hospital stays, and they can provide immediate skilled, clinical care to residents with complex, high level needs.

"It is in the best interests of residents for a registered nurse to be employed around the clock in our nursing homes across NSW."

Mr Holmes was joined by a range of speakers at the community forum including: Cllr Lucille McKenna OAM, Mayor of Ashfield and Director of Nursing at St Mary's Villa; Margaret Zhang, President of Quality Aged Care Action Group Inc; Dr Peta McVey, Senior Lecturer at Sydney Nursing School and Charmaine Crowe, Senior Policy Officer at the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association.

Local candidates running for the seat of Summer Hill in the upcoming state general election were also on hand to address the forum and express their concerns: Jo Haylen (NSW Labor); Max Phillips (NSW Greens) and Susan Price (NSW Socialist Alliance). Liberal candidate Julie Passas did not attend.

Mr Holmes confirmed that the NSW government introduced an interim measure in June 2014 to maintain the requirement while it consults with the aged care sector. A decision is due to be made by December this year.

"There are around 880 aged care facilities in NSW, a large proportion of these meet the definition of 'nursing home' and could lose the registered nurse requirement if the government does not act to transfer the requirement into new legislation," Mr Holmes said.



“We are calling on the Ministry of Health to ensure the requirement is permanently legislated for nursing homes in NSW and will continue to lobby on behalf of registered nurses, enrolled nurses and assistants in nursing for safe staffing and high quality of care across the aged care sector.”

Many residents with loved ones in aged care, representatives of local community groups, aged care nurses, doctors and carers, as well as academics took the opportunity to sign a petition circulated by the NSWNMA, which insists on registered nurses 24/7 in NSW nursing homes.

Further details on the petition can be found at www.nswnma.asn.au.

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