



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

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

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## NSW Government drops RNs in aged care

NSW Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, has responded to the *Inquiry into registered nurses in NSW nursing homes* with the intention to remove the legal requirement for a registered nurse to be on site at all times in aged care facilities where there are people with high care needs.

In her response to the inquiry's recommendation to retain the requirement in the *Public Health Act 2010*, Skinner advised that the state government would follow the lead of Commonwealth legislation that does not currently recognise the need for a registered nurse 24/7.

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) condemned the announcement to allow nursing homes to operate without a fully qualified registered nurse, arguing it would leave thousands of vulnerable elderly people in the sole care of unregulated workers and result in unnecessary trips to emergency departments to receive nursing care.

Brett Holmes, General Secretary of the NSWNMA, said by upsetting the staffing skill-mix in residential aged care facilities, the NSW Government was setting Australians up for more horror stories of neglect and hospitalisations.

"It's very sad news for NSW's elderly and families who rely on aged care facilities to operate to a standard of care that allows the elderly to have a dignified journey through the final years of their lives," Mr Holmes said.

"Having an appropriate skill mix in aged care facilities where there are people with high care needs is crucial. At an average age of 83.5, Australians entering aged care facilities are older and frailer than ever before, many with chronic and complex care needs. This is why it's so important to have legislation to enforce that high level of care going forward. This decision will send NSW backwards.

"With a growing ageing population in Australia, demand for aged care beds is estimated to reach 392,000 by 2025, yet we're removing the systems in place that ensure we can cope. It simply doesn't make sense.

"The NSWNMA will continue to campaign against the implementation of legislation changes and call on members of the upper house of the NSW Parliament to do everything within their power to stand up for the rights of the elderly in NSW. It will remain our priority to maintain the regulation as a minimum requirement in NSW residential aged care facilities."

The RN 24/7 (registered nurses in aged care 24/7) campaign in NSW has been extensive. Around 165 organisations and individuals made submissions to the *Inquiry into registered nurses in New South Wales nursing homes*. In addition, the NSWNMA has been lobbying for almost two years, collecting over 25,000 signatures of public support and more recently joining 16 organisations around the state to write an open letter to the Minister for Health demanding state legislation maintain the requirement.

\* *Attachment: NSW Government response to the recommendations made by the legislative Council Inquiry into registered nurses in NSW nursing homes*

\*\* *Interviews with aged care nurses and Brett Holmes available from midday tomorrow at May Day celebrations in Victoria Park*



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