



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aged care under serious threat of destabilisation

The federal government's decision to slash \$1.2 billion in funding from the budget for nursing home residents with complex health care needs has put Australia's aged care sector in serious danger.

Less than a week after the NSW government announced its decision to remove the requirement for registered nurses in NSW nursing homes, the funding cut gives providers incentive to start cutting skilled staff as soon as the legislation is amended.

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) fears both revisions are a recipe for disaster in NSW, promoting a dangerous model of care that permits completely untrained staff to manage patients with complex care needs in residential aged care.

Brett Holmes, General Secretary of the NSWNMA, said NSW had the potential to be worse off than any other state when the *NSW Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966* is updated.

"NSW has gone from best to worst in the space of a week. We're extremely worried that the changes to the *NSW Public Health Act 2010* are just the beginning. There is growing concern that if the changes to the *NSW Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966* allow unlicensed staff with minimal training to administer medication to unstable and dying residents receiving palliation with dangerous drugs of addiction, there will be completely inadequate regulation in NSW nursing homes," Mr Holmes said.

"These changes in the federal budget to cut funding to the most frail and dependent residents are simply inhumane. To take money away from those who need it most just to try and curb the inevitable costs associated with the growing ageing population with complex and chronic illnesses, is an irresponsible and unacceptable response.

"By removing legal requirements for registered nurses, the State government is destabilising the entire skilled staff structure, creating a knock-on effect that eliminates the need for Directors of Nursing and means Enrolled Nurses will be unable to operate within their professional guidelines.

"Cuts to the aged care budget is a short sighted saving as it seeks only to transfer the cost to overstretched emergency departments. Cases that were once managed by registered nurses will need to be referred to hospital, costing much more in the long-run.

"Not for Profit Aged Care Providers hailed the announcement to remove nurses from the NSW legislation as a victory with a round of applause at their Annual Conference in Sydney this week. At the same conference, a representative from the Department of Health confirmed their intentions to give greater responsibility for the regulation of the aged care sector to providers. The government has given employers the all clear to have complete reign without any effective regulation.

"Without appropriate regulation, minimum staffing ratios or clinical oversight from skilled staff, nursing homes in NSW are opening themselves up to complete disarray. The NSWNMA will continue to campaign against these changes in NSW and Australia."

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