



save*^{*}*^{*} medicare



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION
MEDIA RELEASE
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The race to save Medicare is on

A street theatre event, signaling the start of the race to stop \$650 million of cuts to Medicare, will entertain and inform city workers on their lunch break at midday TODAY in Martin Place.

The action is a joint initiative between the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), Save Medicare, the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), and Unions NSW.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said it was important to make the point on International Midwives Day because many people, especially pregnant women, still don't understand the extent of the changes and how they will be affected.

"Many women will be shocked to learn that routine pregnancy tests will carry a price tag after 1 July, when bulk-billing incentives for diagnostic imaging and pathology end. Under the new system, patients could be hit with up-front costs for tests that will no longer be fully funded by Medicare rebates. This means blood tests, pathology, pap smears, X-rays and MRIs will not be free," Mr Holmes said.

"Everyone with a Medicare card who visits the doctor and requires one of these diagnostic tests will be affected but it's going to hit pregnant women, cancer patients and the chronically ill the hardest.

"It's clear from Tuesday's budget that this government is offering no assistance for health and will happily have patients pay for services that should be covered by their taxes. People won't know what hit them when we reach July and the pathology company suddenly starts asking them to hand over their credit card."

Secretary of Unions NSW, Mark Morey added it was vital to inform the public about what the cuts mean before they vote this election.

"The Coalition's clear intention is to privatise Medicare by stealth. As Australians go to the polls, they should understand that this election could set Australia down the path towards Americanising its health system, with huge out of pocket costs hitting family budgets," Mr Morey said.

Save Medicare's Amy Thomas suggested there should be more investment in Medicare to make sure those who needed tests the most had better access.

"We need to be extending Medicare - not introducing payments for essential tests. We know this means those who can't afford it will defer or decline important, and in some cases, life-saving tests," said Ms Thomas.

"Just as we buried Tony Abbott's GP co payment with protests and campaigning, we will bury Malcolm Turnbull's too. We won't rest on this."

Deputy Secretary of the CPSU, Melissa Donnelly, said that the Government's plans to privatise Medicare payments will put the highly sensitive medical and financial records of all Australians into private hands.

"Medicare absolutely needs to stay in public hands. Privatising Medicare payments would mean handing control of a system that we all rely on to a private company that would not be answerable to the Australian public," Ms Donnelly said.

“This privatisation could threaten thousands of jobs, particularly in regional Australia. These are ordinary working people delivering Medicare services who are worried about their futures. The Government needs to come clean on how many jobs are threatened by their move”.

Coinciding with International Midwives Day (5 May), the Race to Save Medicare begins at midday today.

WHEN: from 12pm THURSDAY, 5 May 2016

WHAT: Speeches/interviews/photo opportunities

WHERE: Martin Place Amphitheatre (cnr of Castlereagh and Pitt)
Sydney

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