



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Funding cuts will see the end of RNs in aged care

A leading NSW provider has admitted the government's \$1.8 billion cuts could lead to the end of registered nurses (RNs) in aged care.

Scalabrini Village CEO Chris Rigby told *Australian Ageing Agenda* that changes to the Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) will lead to an 11.3 per cent reduction in annual funding for the facility, which would be countered by decreasing registered nursing staff and rejecting residents with high complex care needs.

"We would have to change our models of care. We would have to change our staffing. As a matter of policy we have registered nursing staff on 24/7. We support those registered nurses with clinical nurse specialists and with a clinical nurse educator.

"Consequently we are able to care safely and well for people with very high complex care needs. In the future, I don't know what we are going to do. We wouldn't be able to accept such residents and we wouldn't be able to afford to employ the registered nursing staff at the levels that we currently employ them."

The comments confirm warnings from the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) that many providers will look to cut staffing and models of care in order to sustain profitable business models.

Brett Holmes, General Secretary of the NSWNMA said Rigby's admission proves providers are forced to put their financial balance sheets before quality care.

"When the NSW government advised of its intention to remove the legal requirement for a registered nurse on site at all times in aged care facilities where there are people with high care needs, we knew there would need to be a motive for facilities to justify reducing their standard of care," Mr Holmes said.

"Just a few days later, the federal budget delivered that excuse in the form of \$1.2 billion in cuts to funding for complex care, which brings the total to \$1.8 billion after the \$607 million in the MYEFO (Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook) is taken into account.

"We know it's not uncommon for one RN to be looking after 100 patients in some nursing homes, so to completely remove that little support carers and residents have, is outrageous. Australia's population aged 65 and older is projected to increase from 2.5 million in 2002 to 4.2 million in 2021. The government needs to start planning for this or we simply won't cope. Removing funding is not a responsible way to deal with the issue and provide our elderly with the support they need.

"The removal of RNs will result in the complete deregulation of the sector and put an enormous strain on our public hospitals.

"This election, we're calling on the Government, the Opposition and the Greens to commit to restoring funding and implementing a future investment plan to ensure funding support goes to residents and carers, rather than straight into the pockets of providers."



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