



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

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

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## Estia cuts Sunday penalty rates

Aged care provider, Estia, has announced it will reduce Sunday penalty rates for nurses caring for the frail and elderly in its homes by 15 per cent from 75 per cent to 60 per cent.

Estia's proposal for a new Enterprise Agreement would see already low paid nurses lose up to \$41.55 for an eight hour Sunday shift. The move pre-empts any decision by the Fair Work Commission to change Sunday penalty rates and confirms that the attack on penalty rates is not confined to shops and restaurants.

NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) General Secretary, Brett Holmes, said reducing Sunday rates would begin to erode the boundaries of the five day working week.

"Our elderly and sick require care around the clock. Penalty rates acknowledge that nurses are working unsociable hours and giving up their weekends to keep that system going. By reducing them, we risk losing those hard workers who will no longer be willing to miss out family and leisure time for just 60 per cent more than what they'd earn working Monday to Friday," Mr Holmes said.

"Estia claim to balance these losses by increasing Saturday penalty rates from 50 per cent to 60 percent but that's still an overall reduction in the incentive for people to give up their weekend to work, with Estia getting to keep a 5% saving on every family sacrifice made by weekend workers. Aged care workers do not have a choice in what days they are rostered to work, so if you're working on a Sunday and not a Saturday, as many people do, you lose out significantly.

"For a Registered Nurse working most Sundays it's a loss of around \$2000 a year and \$1,200 for an Assistant in Nursing (AiN). An AiN is already on an hourly wage of between \$21.42 and \$21.75 an hour, so it's not hard to see how these changes to Sunday rates will greatly affect their standard of living."

Other conditions will also be reduced as a result of Estia's proposed Agreement, including access to the Fair Work Commission – the independent umpire for arbitrations - which would only be allowed with Estia's consent. This means if Estia management know they won't win a decision by the umpire they simply refuse to allow the umpire on the field.

"Not only are they decreasing take home pay with this new agreement, they're also taking away the rights of workers to the independent umpire. It's unacceptable and we'll be advising all our members to reject these attacks to their working conditions and agreements," Mr Holmes said.

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