



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

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21 July, 2017

## Nurses and midwives support the majority on dying with dignity

Hundreds of nurses and midwives have considered the moral and ethical challenges of assisted dying and voted in support of the need for legislative change to occur in New South Wales.

More than 500 delegates attending the 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) endorsed an updated position on behalf of their 64,000 nursing and midwifery colleagues.

NSWNMA President Coral Levett acknowledged the widespread community debate on assisted dying and why it was imperative for nurses and midwives to have a well-informed position on the topic.

"Assisted dying is a complex social issue and as nursing and midwifery professionals we are often caught in the crosshairs of this debate, either directly during our daily working roles or when discussions arise within our community or family circles," Ms Levett said.

"We represent a very diverse membership and we strongly believe that nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing are entitled to their own opinion, however, we also acknowledge that people with a terminal or incurable illness should have the right to choose to die with dignity.

"Seven countries around the globe have legalised assisted dying and this empowers over 100 million people with the full choice about what happens to them at the end of their life. Currently, not one Australian is afforded this choice and that is why legislative reform is so important."

A number of opinion polls conducted between 2007 and 2016 show around 80 per cent of Australian's are in favour of assisted dying being available to those with terminal or incurable illness.

Ms Levett confirmed the NSWNMA would continue to lobby all levels of government to ensure adequate resourcing of palliative care services, including the availability of suitably qualified nurses and midwives.

"This is a very important issue for the nursing profession. Given our compassion for those who suffer and our concern for quality of life being afforded to every individual, this is an issue worth fighting for to ensure the right balance is achieved and all sides of the debate are well considered," Ms Levett said.

Nursing and midwifery delegates from across the state are gathered at Sydney's Rosehill Gardens Grand Pavilion for the NSWNMA's 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference.

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