



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

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Nurses oppose aged care assessment privatisation

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has condemned plans by the federal government to privatise the current aged care assessment process, arguing it would have widespread implications for the state's health sector.

The government wants to streamline the current Regional Assessment Service (RAS) and Aged Care Assessment Teams (ACATs), and put the entire assessment process out to tender this year.

Acting NSWNMA General Secretary, Judith Kiejda, said a recent member survey revealed more than 80 per cent of respondents worked with ACAT assessors in their daily roles and a majority believe privatisation would have a negative impact.

"Our members are opposed to the plan and fear handing the assessment process over to private providers would hinder the already under-resourced public service, particularly in rural and regional areas," Ms Kiejda said.

"There are also fears non-clinical administration staff would replace the highly-skilled nurses who carry out these aged care assessments. Such a move could only lead to poor outcomes for the elderly residents requiring care, not to mention shattering the job security of a qualified, multidisciplinary assessment workforce.

"At a time when the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety has implored urgent interventions to help lift Australia's aged care sector out of the crisis it is in, privatising this essential service is not the answer.

"It's abundantly clear that we should be focused on improving the quality of care and safety afforded to all elderly Australians, not buck passing our responsibilities.

"The federal government claims to want person-centred care to be at the core of our aged care sector, yet it's planning to dilute the impartiality of a vital step in the care journey. It's ridiculous.

"We don't deny reforms are necessary to improve the aged care sector, however, there's no evidence to suggest privatising the aged care assessment process – currently integrated in state and territory public health – would result in better outcomes for the elderly Australians seeking aged care."

Last week, over 150 NSWNMA delegates voted unanimously in support of three resolutions to oppose the federal government's ACAT privatisation plan and to campaign against such a move.

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