



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

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## **Commonwealth gaffe on aged care worker vaccinations**

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has criticised the decision to make COVID-19 vaccinations compulsory for the aged care workforce, given the Commonwealth government's poor management of the rollout to date.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, said the shift to mandatory vaccinations for residential aged care workers after months of inconsistencies, was another example of the government's inability to properly support the sector.

"The Commonwealth failed the aged care workforce back when it chose to only deliver vaccinations to residents in residential aged care facilities, leaving staff to fend for themselves," said Mr Holmes.

"It didn't have to come to this. If the rollout was properly streamlined to incorporate the vaccination of aged care staff at the same time as residents, we wouldn't be in this predicament. The government must take more responsibility and provide onsite workplace vaccinations for aged care workers.

"Aged care workers have been heavily scrutinised throughout the aged care royal commission and again through COVID-19 outbreaks. Now they're being subjected to a compulsory vaccination policy because the Commonwealth didn't listen and vaccinate staff alongside residents in the first place.

"Many aged care nurses have described the difficulties they've experienced trying to secure vaccination appointments by themselves and in their own time. Further blame shifting onto aged care workers could risk more leaving the sector altogether.

"The \$11 million federal grant announced will not be enough to cover time off for vaccinations or sick leave that may be required as a result of side effects. Providers will need to somehow cover the shortfall or workers will miss out.

"Issues facing the aged care sector that were heavily canvassed during the royal commission haven't simply vanished. They are ongoing, including the fragility of the workforce, who are some of the lowest paid employees."

Nurses are required to practice in accordance with the professional codes and guidelines set by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia. The NSWNMA continues to strongly encourage members to have vaccinations, unless medically contraindicated.

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