



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

General Secretary: Brett Holmes | Assistant General Secretary: Judith Kiejda
P (02) 8595 1234 | www.facebook.com/nswnma | twitter.com/nswnma

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NSW Nationals turn backs on registered nurses in aged care

The ongoing delivery of qualified, highly skilled nursing care in NSW residential aged care facilities has been dealt a significant blow, after the Berejiklian Government today refused to keep one registered nurse on duty at all times in high care nursing homes.

On the eve of International Nurses' Day, lower house Nationals and Liberal Party MPs voted down the Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party bill, which passed the upper house unopposed only last week.

General Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), Brett Holmes, said the government's decision was shameful and over time would erode the level of quality care provided to some of the state's most vulnerable aged care residents.

"This is a tragic outcome for families with loved ones in high care residential aged care facilities across NSW and is a clear abrogation of responsibility by the Health Minister and Nationals MPs purporting to represent rural communities," Mr Holmes said.

"Rather than ensuring a high standard of care is maintained throughout facilities with high care residents, the government has hidden behind an ill-informed argument that small regional aged care facilities would close if the requirement to employ one registered nurse remained in the *Public Health Act 2010*.

"This spurious argument ignores the fact that regional aged care facilities receive Commonwealth funding for complex and high care residents at the same rate as city-based facilities and at least 70 per cent of all residents are deemed to be high care before entering a site. Small rural or isolated facilities also receive additional special Commonwealth funding.

"Nationals MPs have essentially said their constituents don't deserve a registered nurse on site 24 hours a day and therefore can be transferred by ambulance to the local public hospital or Multi-Purpose Service to wait in the emergency department for assessment and treatment.

"We have long argued that removing registered nurses from high care nursing homes will erode the safety measures that protect residents and our already stretched public hospital system."

Nationals Party MPs who spoke against the bill today include, Myall Lakes MP, Stephen Bromhead; Upper Hunter MP, Michael Johnsen; Barwon MP, Kevin Humphries; Port Macquarie MP, Leslie Williams and Coffs Harbour MP, Andrew Fraser.

Mr Holmes said the decision would likely result in significant downgrades in the quality of care delivered and expressed his disappointment on behalf of nurses, midwives and more than 24,000 community members who signed a petition in 2015.

The NSWNMA will continue to campaign at the state and federal level, advocating for quality nursing care and pressuring providers to meet the real needs of vulnerable aged care residents.

**NB: Photo from the steps of NSW Parliament today is attached*



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MEDIA CONTACTS:

Brett Holmes, General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 550 324

Judith Kiejda, Assistant General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 674 119

Gia Hayne, Media Advisor, NSWNMA 0488 015 317