



Nurses' aged care plea

Postcards push for a better deal

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NEPEAN Hospital staff have called on the Federal Government to better fund aged care nursing, claiming a lack of qualified nursing home staff is threatening quality care.

Visiting Federal Lindsay Labor MP David Bradbury earlier this month, nurses presented 500 signed postcards as part of the Australian Nurses Federation (ANF) campaign Because We Care.

The call came as the *Penrith Press* Community Pulse Survey revealed 58 per cent of readers believed the city needed more aged care services.

Not surprisingly, 70 per cent of readers aged over 55 believed more services were needed.

Nurse Peter Mason said a lack of

qualified staff in nursing homes around Penrith meant patients were transferred to the Nepean Hospital emergency department for relatively minor procedures.

"It means nursing care is being delivered by the public health system which puts pressure on emergency," Mr Mason said.

"We're campaigning for better funding for qualified nurses to deliver care in the nursing home setting."

According to the ANF, the number of aged care nurses dropped by more than 4000 to 23,000 in 2007.

The federation claims nurses are being replaced by less-qualified "assistants in nursing", with an extra 7500 employed over the same period.

The ANF is calling for better pay

for aged care nurses, who it says are paid up to \$300 a week less than nurses in other sectors.

It is also demanding nursing homes be made more accountable for the way in which they spend federal taxpayer dollars.

Mr Bradbury described the pay disparity as "a major concern" and said he supported aged care nursing staff in their bid for better pay.

He said the Federal Government was delivering \$41 billion to the aged care sector over the next four years.

"So there is capacity there for the sector to better recognise the contribution that its nursing staff make to the care and wellbeing of the elderly residents in our aged care facilities," Mr Bradbury said.



Nepean Hospital nurse Peter Mason presents David Bradbury with the postcards calling for more nurses in aged care facilities.

Picture: MATT SULLIVAN