



media release

11 September 2009

25% Wage Cut Threat for Aged Care Nurses

Aged care nurses in NSW will be among workers hardest hit by the Rudd Government's award modernisation process - with some facing a drop in their pay of nearly \$300 per week.

Last Friday (September 4) the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) released details of 49 new awards as part of the award modernisation process introduced by the federal government.

Assistant Federal Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation, Lee Thomas said the new award for aged care was a perverse outcome that no one in the community would support.

"As people begin to understand the ramifications of this decision they will feel disillusioned and angry that the Rudd Government could allow this to happen.

"Asking nurses who earn as little as \$738 a week to take a pay cut of \$88 a week is beyond belief.

"These cuts will undermine the quality of care for many older Australians and place real financial pressure on nurses and their families.

"It is of great concern that the largest cuts are directed at the most qualified and experienced nurses - with a registered nurse with eight years experience losing nearly \$295 a week.

"This decision will affect over ten thousand aged care nurses in NSW alone.

"Some nurses may be protected by enterprise agreements but thousands rely on the award and it is unfair to expect these nurses to take a pay cut of up to 25% over the next five years.

"The effect will be to drive nurses out of the system and make it even more difficult to attract and retain quality staff to work in aged care facilities," she said.

Ms Thomas said Australians voted decisively against the Howard Government's Workchoices legislation at the last election and it was time for the Rudd Government to deliver a fair outcome.

NSW Nurses' Association General Secretary, Brett Holmes said the Federal Workplace Relations Minister, Julia Gillard must step in as a matter of urgency.

"The Federal Government must ensure that we have a minimum wages system that does not cut wages nor lead to a wages freeze which would result in a real wages cut as a result of inflation over the next five years," Mr Holmes said.

Ms Thomas said this issue highlights the importance the ANF **Because We Care** campaign.

The ANF is campaigning to highlight the inequities in aged care and to gain improvements in both working conditions for aged care workers to ensure quality care for older Australians.



The **Because We Care** campaign is aimed at raising awareness and recognition of Australia's highly skilled and dedicated aged care nursing and care workforce, by focusing on:

- The right balance of skills and nursing hours so that nursing and care staff can provide quality care for every resident.
- Fair pay for aged care nurses and care staff.
- Recognition of the professional skills of Assistants in Nursing and care staff through a national licensing system.
- A guarantee that taxpayer funding is used for nursing and personal care for each resident.

Examples of the wage cuts are set out below:

| Classification | Current NSW Award | Modern Award | Difference over 5 years |
|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Enrolled Nurse | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| 1st year | 738.34 | 650.00 | 88.34 |
| 2nd year | 752.78 | 659.00 | 93.78 |
| 3rd year | 762.66 | 668.00 | 94.66 |
| 4th year | 777.86 | 678.00 | 99.86 |
| 5th year + | 793.06 | 685.00 | 108.06 |
| Registered Nurse | | | |
| 1st year | 824.22 | 697.00 | 127.22 |
| 8th year + | 1137.34 | 843.00 | 294.34 |

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