

**Media release**  
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## **It's not just about nurses: PC penalty rates recommendations miss the point**

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) has hit out against the Productivity Commission's recommendation for a two-tiered penalty rates system, claiming the move has the capacity to jeopardise services across all sectors and threaten workforce participation.

While the draft report of the Productivity Commission's inquiry into workplace relations has not recommended changes to penalty rates for frontline medical and emergency workers, CEO/Secretary Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars says the proposed two-tiered system is the thin end of the wedge for all workers.

"Tinkering with penalty rates in any sector sets a dangerous and unacceptable precedent that penalty rates are up for negotiation. A two-tiered system will simply be a race to the bottom," Ms Dabars said.

"The very purpose of penalty rates is to compensate workers for working challenging and unsocial hours. Changes to penalty rates in any sector has the capacity to threaten workforce participation – would you put your hand up to work Sunday if you were receiving less compensation for it?"

Ms Dabars added that the recommendations are of deep concern to personal care workers, who are among the nation's lowest paid workforce and most award reliant, and therefore among the most vulnerable to any changes.

"Personal care workers are among the most dependent of all workers on penalty rates, with 22% of their take home pay supplemented by shift penalties," she said.

"For many of these workers, any changes to their penalties could be the difference between paying the mortgage or rent, bills or school fees or not."

"We are urging all Members of Parliament to back workers and commit to protecting penalty rates in all sectors. Given the Coalition's track record with *WorkChoices*, we simply cannot allow to this Government to use these recommendations as a mandate to appoint itself judge, jury and executioner when it comes to workplace relations."