



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

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17 September, 2019

Under-reporting of workplace discrimination rife in health

Widespread cultural discrimination between workers in the health sector has been exposed in a new report, with one in four nurses and midwives experiencing racial discrimination monthly.

[‘The Cultural Safety Gap’](#) report, released by the NSW Nurses and Midwives’ Association (NSWNMA), also revealed two in three nurses and midwives did not report the incident, while almost 90 per cent were unaware of any cultural support programs in their workplace.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, said the value of having culturally and linguistically diverse nurses or midwives in a workplace was often contradicted by a lack of respect they experience as individuals in the same healthcare setting.

“Historically, the focus has often been on workers being aware of patients’ or residents’ cultural backgrounds or sensitivities, while little has been done to encourage inclusiveness between work colleagues.

“Our report shows culturally and linguistically diverse nurses and midwives employed at all levels, and in all types of health settings, experienced some form of racial discrimination in their workplace,” Mr Holmes said.

“The discrimination they experienced ranged from direct verbal attacks, to isolation and unfair scheduling of workloads.

“The main form of racial discrimination was stereotyping, with 54 per cent of respondents being subjected to stereotyping based on their culture, language or appearance.

“Workplace discrimination is also not confined to one specific area of the health sector either. These issues are prevalent across the public health system, private sector and also in aged care.”

Despite nurses and midwives being required to pass English competency assessments before they can obtain registration to practice in Australia, accent or language discrimination is also widespread.

“Thirty per cent of nurses and midwives confirmed they had been instructed not to speak languages other than English in the workplace,” said Mr Holmes, most commonly in residential aged care.

Mr Holmes said the report clearly indicated more work was required to improve organisational cultures, in an effort to close the cultural safety gap for nurses and midwives.

The NSWNMA is working with SafeWork NSW, Anti-Discrimination NSW and the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra to promote inclusiveness and build cultural safety in workplaces.

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