



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

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

21 September, 2016

Nurses to fight privatisation of NSW hospitals

NSW nurses have resolved to take all necessary actions to conduct a campaign against the privatisation of NSW public hospitals and services. At a NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) delegates meeting last night, branch officials unanimously voted to develop a community awareness campaign, including industrial action and media advertising against the privatisation agenda of the Baird Liberal National State Government.

The affect the changes might have on nurse to patient ratios, given no large private hospital operator has agreed to nurse to patient ratios anywhere in NSW, gave rise for concern of patient safety from the majority. In a recent poll conducted by the NSWNMA, 97 per cent of the 918 respondents believed the privatisation of public health services leads to poorer regulation.

NSWNMA branch officials from some of the five major regional hospitals selected for privatisation spoke on behalf of members.

"We're appalled at the philosophy of making money out of people's misery. How are they going to pay a profit to a private enterprise - other than by cutting back on the staff and their pay or by cutting the patients' care that they receive. We're already in a long and protracted battle over de-skilling in Goulburn and the impact it has in terms of safety of the staff and safety of the patients. This privatisation is only going to make the matter worse," said Secretary of the Goulburn Community Mental Health branch, Colin Moore.

"We've already been told Bourke Street Health Service is closing within 12 months. That was a big surprise. Nobody knew that until yesterday. There is a lot of unrest about job insecurity and our members are really, really worried," said Assistant Secretary of the Goulburn Base Hospital branch, Jane Cotter.

"We're a very large small hospital. We had 65,000 presentations to emergency this year. We average 200 patients per day through our emergency department. How is that going to work as a private facility? 85 per cent of our presentations do not have any health insurance. How are they going to make a profit out of that?" said Assistant Secretary of the Northern Central Coast branch (Wyong Hospital), Pamela Illingworth.

"They're telling us the contract has to have a service provision similar to the size of the hospital. Wyong has 300 beds and 1500 staff and the expression of interest only requires those applying to have operated a hospital facility with 50 beds. How come we get picked in the five and you don't? If we don't stand together on this, we will all lose," said President of the Central Coast Mental Health branch (Wyong Mental Health Centre), Graeme Miller.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, said members were right to be worried, especially since Premier Mike Baird introduced a regulation in June to terminate the redundancy entitlements of public servants who are transferred to the non-government sector.



“This news to suddenly privatise five public hospitals has been thrown on the people of NSW in the same way this government deals with everything: zero consultation with workers, their unions, the community or professionals. Wyong nurses were told in staff meetings on Monday - days after the announcement. All we have to go off is a press release sent from Minister Skinner’s office with no indication of how the model will work and a meagre two year employment guarantee. Not even the state government seems to know the details. There’s been no thought put into this plan, which we know from past experience will only benefit shareholders of the private operators,” Mr Holmes said.

“History tells us the public-private partnership model is flawed. It isn’t favourable for taxpayers because it ends up costing more in the long-run. These private operators are relying on public money to fund their profits. The government thinks they’re delivering it cheaper but private operators need to deliver a profit to shareholders. Somebody is losing here and it’s not the government or private operators: it’s patients and staff. At Royal North Shore where cleaning was outsourced, patient care was compromised because of resource constraints – we heard stories of patients being left in hallways because there were no clean beds. The PPP at Port Macquarie also failed miserably with costs to the taxpayer almost doubling. It didn’t take long in both cases for the government to reclaim operation of the services.

“This is a step towards the Americanisation of our health system and a way for the government to distance itself from its responsibility to deliver a public health system by and for the people. The community deserves to have a say in how their public hospitals are run and we will continue this campaign with their support.”

The NSWNMA will consult with other health unions to launch its statewide campaign and continue the fight against the privatisation of all NSW public hospitals and services until the 2019 state election.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Brett Holmes, General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 550 324

Danielle Mahoney, Media Advisor, NSWNMA 0488 015 317