



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

General Secretary: Brett Holmes | Assistant General Secretary: Judith Kiejda
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Mental health staffing needs attention now

Nurses and midwives have pleaded with NSW Minister for Mental Health, Tanya Davies, to urgently address systemic staffing and skill mix issues within the state's mental health system and called for new safety and monitoring technology to be implemented.

Addressing the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association's (NSWNMA) 72nd Annual Conference at Rosehill Gardens Grand Pavilion in Sydney this afternoon, Ms Davies outlined the government's current Productive Mental Health Ward program.

"Nurses and midwives are well placed to influence patient safety and quality of care," Ms Davies said.

"This [*Productive Mental Health Ward*] initiative puts quality at the heart of healthcare and empowers the clinical team, in particular the nursing team, to improve the patient experience through leadership, team performance and the delivery of safe, reliable, effective care."

Ms Davis also discussed the NSW Ministry of Health's efforts to improve safety and security across the public health system.

"It is a given that the safety of our patients is critical," Ms Davies remarked.

"Patients rightly expect to be safe in our health system but equally, the system must be safe for the staff working in it."

NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, implored the Minister to ensure appropriate training and supervision is provided across all mental health settings.

"This is something that cannot continue to be ignored. We need to see solutions far and wide to make sure all patients within mental health units are observed and violence is minimised to reduce the need for seclusion," Mr Holmes said.

"Far too often a lack of resources, human and otherwise, leads to the use of seclusion to contain violent, aggressive or self-harming patients. This is traumatic for patients and a high risk activity for nurses and other staff who are required to put it into practice.

"We must ensure the government, Ministry and Local Health Districts all understand that additional resources are vital to deliver improvements within mental health units.

"The rise in new technology is resulting in better ways to improve observation of mental health patients. We must utilise these aids to reduce patient trauma.

"Mental Health is an area where, apart from CCTV, very little work has been done on the benefits of technology for patient observation.

"Millions of us wear technology to monitor our heart rates and activity, yet we are still waiting for a wearable monitor for mental health patients that might reduce stress and sleep disturbance during 15 minute observations which are required around the clock.

"I look forward to an announcement of future trials and urge the Minister to support the introduction of such technology," Mr Holmes concluded.



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The 72nd NSWNMA Annual Conference continues at Rosehill Gardens Grand Pavilion tomorrow, Friday 21 July.

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