



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

General Secretary: Brett Holmes | Assistant General Secretary: Judith Kiejda

[P \(02\) 8595 1234](tel:(02)85951234) [f www.facebook.com/nswnma](https://www.facebook.com/nswnma) [t twitter.com/nswnma](https://twitter.com/nswnma)

15 May, 2014

PM inflicts pain, putting state's health at risk

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has condemned the Abbott Government's first Budget as an attack on the State's health system with long-lasting side effects, ahead of the federal opposition's Budget in Reply later today.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said Tony Abbott's decision to introduce a \$7 mandatory co-payment for GP visits and impose an extra \$5 per prescription medication could put lives at risk into the future.

"The federal government has deliberately taken the axe to our publicly funded, universal health care system which will force everyday Australians to consider their capacity to pay before their clinical needs," Mr Holmes said.

"Nurses and midwives across the state are angry the federal government has moved to dismantle Medicare, despite 30 years of equitable access for all.

"Our members know that delaying or avoiding GP consultations, diagnostics or pathology tests could lead to catastrophic consequences for outcomes and costs of care for the most vulnerable in our community."

Mr Holmes said Mr Abbott's contempt for universal health care was evident by his push to further cement a two-tier health system, between those who can afford private health insurance and those who have relied on basic coverage under Medicare.

"True to form, Mr Abbott is again undermining our health system by deliberately underfunding it," he said.

"Previously as Health Minister, we witnessed Mr Abbott cutting \$1 billion from public hospitals – enough to pay for 1,000 hospital beds – now as the Prime Minister he's doing it all over again.

"At the last election, NSW constituents were not privy to the fact that a vote for the Liberal Party was a vote for cuts of around \$1.2 billion over the next four years to our state's public hospitals."

Mr Holmes said the federal government's decision to pull out of national partnership agreements for public hospital funding and preventative health programs was a callous act.

As Opposition Leader Bill Shorten prepared to deliver his Budget reply, the NSWNMA has called on Labor, the minor parties and Independents in the Senate to block the government's Budget measures that undermine Medicare and rip funding from health, education and welfare.

Mr Holmes also criticised the federal Treasurer and Finance Minister for not considering the introduction of a modest Financial Transactions Tax (FTT) to help cover the cost of public health service delivery, rather than delivering cuts.



“An FTT could generate billions of dollars by collecting a very small levy on trading of financial instruments such as shares, bonds and futures, which would also have a positive impact of reducing market volatility,” Mr Holmes said.

“There are solutions being ignored by the Abbott government in favour of the loudest and strongest voices – it’s clear that big business will continue to win ahead of everyday Australians under this government.

“By ripping away funding to our public hospitals, Mr Abbott is striking at the services NSW families depend upon as well as the fundamental principle of all nurses and midwives, which is, putting patient safety first.”

Meanwhile, the NSWNMA welcomed a post-Budget commitment by NSW Health Minister, Jillian Skinner, to put patients first and promise no cuts to hospital services and no co-payments for emergency department patients, despite the Budget measure of lifting restrictions to do so.

“We can only hope that Ms Skinner is better at keeping her promises than Prime Minister Abbott, who clearly reneged on his promise of: no cuts to health spending,” Mr Holmes said.

“If the NSW government really is committed to putting patients first, then we can’t see any grounds for objecting to our call for statewide nurse-to-patient ratios.

“Our members are committed to campaigning for mandatory nurse-to-patient ratios and we’d be happy to talk to Ms Skinner about guaranteeing nursing numbers will match patient numbers, no matter what the Budget surprises are.”

MEDIA CONTACT:

Brett Holmes, General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 550 324

Gia Hayne, Media Advisor, NSWNMA 0488 015 317