



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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10 March, 2015

Ratios to be legislated under a Labor Government

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) welcomed today's election commitment by NSW Labor to employ 840 additional nurses in emergency departments and paediatric wards, mandate nurse-to-patient ratios under new legislation and challenged the Liberal-Nationals Coalition to match or better the promise.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said NSW Labor's commitment was evidence of the ongoing effort by nurses and midwives, who had campaigned tirelessly for expanded and improved legally enforceable ratios over several years.

"After four years of lobbying the Liberal-Nationals Government for improved mandated ratios to no avail, NSW Labor has recognised the vital role of nurse-to-patient ratios in the delivery of safe patient care," Mr Holmes said.

"Prior to the 2011 election, our members successfully campaigned for ratios to be introduced into selected wards as part of negotiations on their wages and working conditions Award, but their resolve has been to continue fighting for extended ratios.

"Finally there is now a considered and costed commitment being put forward that will assist in improving safe patient care and help to reduce waiting times in our already over-stretched emergency departments.

"We welcome NSW Labor's promise to employ 735 full-time equivalent (FTE) extra nurses in emergency departments across Peer Group A, B and C hospitals, which would result in a ratio of one nurse to every three patients.

"This addresses our '1:3 in ED' claim that the government to date has ignored and would also ensure a one-to-one ratio for patients in resuscitation beds, one-to-four ratio for Medical Assessment Units and would help alleviate some of the daily pressures faced by nurses.

"A further 105 FTE nurses being committed by NSW Labor to provide increased nursing hours per patient day in paediatric wards within Peer Group A, B and C hospitals would also deliver ratios of one-to-three and provide safer outcomes for young vulnerable patients," said Mr Holmes.

Currently, only selected medical, surgical, mental health and palliative care wards have guaranteed nurse-to-patient ratios and the Liberal-Nationals Coalition has refused to discuss any expansion of the successful system with the NSWNMA.

Independent international research confirms nurse-to-patient ratios are an effective staffing model for safe patient care and increased nursing care leads to better health outcomes for patients.

"According to US patient safety academic Professor Linda Aiken who spoke to Australian nurses in December, for every one patient added to a nurse's workload there is a seven per cent increase in mortality, following common surgical procedures," Mr Holmes said.

"NSW Labor's promise to introduce new legislation to protect both new and existing nurse-to-patient ratios is also very welcome news.



“We cannot reiterate the importance of nurse-to-patient ratios enough. Legally enforcing ratios in NSW will provide security to patients throughout the public health system and prevent future governments from undoing the hard-fought work of our members.”

Mr Holmes acknowledged the efforts of nurses from the state’s rural and regional hospitals and confirmed they would continue the fight for ratios across all public health facilities, regardless of their size.

“As advocates for better health outcomes on behalf of their patients, our members will continue to lobby all political parties to achieve improved ratios because they know it saves lives,” said Mr Holmes.

“Following today’s commitment by NSW Labor, we continue to call on the Liberal-Nationals Coalition to consult with the NSWNMA to secure safe patient care through improved and expanded nurse-to-patient ratios, delivered by guaranteed nursing hours per patient day.”

“Nurses and midwives across the state will be looking to the Liberal-Nationals to demonstrate a real commitment to better patient outcomes by matching or improving NSW Labor’s promise.”

Based on the latest NSW Ministry of Health published list, the following hospitals would benefit from NSW Labor’s ratios commitment:

Peer Group A – Bankstown Lidcombe Hospital; Prince of Wales Hospital; Concord Repatriation Hospital; Gosford Hospital; Westmead Hospital; St George Hospital; Royal North Shore Hospital; Liverpool Hospital; Royal Prince Alfred Hospital; Nepean Hospital; St Vincents Hospital, Darlinghurst; John Hunter Hospital; Wollongong Hospital; Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick; The Children's Hospital at Westmead; Sydney Hospital & Eye Hospital.

Peer Group B – Blacktown Hospital; Campbelltown Hospital; Coffs Harbour Health Campus; Hornsby Ku-Ring-Gai Hospital; Lismore Base Hospital; Sutherland Hospital & Community Health Service; Orange Base Hospital; Port Macquarie Base Hospital; Tamworth Rural Referral Hospital; The Tweed Hospital; Wagga Wagga Base Hospital; Albury Wodonga Health - Albury Campus; Auburn Hospital; Canterbury Hospital; Dubbo Base Hospital & Health Service; Maitland Hospital; Manly Hospital; Manning Hospital – Taree; Mona Vale Hospital & Community Health Services; Fairfield Hospital; Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital; Wyong Hospital;

Peer Group C – Broken Hill Base Hospital; Bathurst Base Hospital; Bega District Hospital; Grafton Base Hospital & Health Service; Goulburn Health Service; Murwillumbah District Hospital; Mount Druitt Hospital; Griffith Base Hospital; Armidale Rural Referral Hospital; Ryde Hospital & Community Health Services; Shellharbour Hospital; Belmont District Hospital; Bowral and District Hospital; Ballina District Hospital; Narrabri District Hospital & Health Service; Lithgow District Hospital; Batemans Bay District Hospital; Moruya District Hospital; Blue Mountains Dist ANZAC Memorial Hospital; Cessnock District Hospital; Kurri Kurri District Hospital; Casino & District Memorial Hospital; Maclean District Hospital; Cowra District Hospital; Young District Hospital; Mudgee Health Service; Cooma Hospital & Health Service; Queanbeyan Hospital & HC Service; Deniliquin Hospital; Moree District Hospital; The Forbes District Hospital; Kempsey District Hospital; Macksville Health Campus; Milton-Ulladulla Hospital; Gunnedah District Hospital; Muswellbrook District Hospital; Singleton District Hospital.

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