



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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More nurses and midwives pledge fails to deliver improved ratios

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has cautiously welcomed the latest election promise by the Liberal-Nationals Coalition regarding frontline health workers.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said Premier Mike Baird's election pledge to increase frontline nursing and midwifery staff by 2,100 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions failed to address ongoing workload issues in the public hospital system through an expansion of nurse-to-patient ratios.

"It appears to us that 2,100 FTE positions may only keep pace with anticipated growth in our public health system, as a result of population growth and the increased demands of our ageing population," Mr Holmes said.

"Any effort to boost overall nurse numbers in our state's public health system must be matched with a commitment to improve nurse-to-patient ratios using the 'nursing hours per patient day' model and mandated statewide through the introduction of legislation.

"In recent weeks, the Health Minister has again been caught up in her own semantics argument, despite 'nursing hours per patient day' equating to a nurse-to-patient ratio – they are the same thing.

"Our 60,000 strong members have been lobbying the Liberal-Nationals Coalition repeatedly to improve and mandate ratios throughout our public hospitals to ensure the delivery of safe patient care.

"Our members in regional NSW have no guarantee that the additional nurses announced today would improve the nursing hours allocated to their patients, compared to city patients who receive up to one hour per day more of nursing care."

Following the 2011 election, the Liberal-National Coalition honoured a commitment to introduce nurse-to-patient ratios into the medical and surgical wards of metropolitan and large regional hospitals, as part of negotiations over the public health system wages and conditions Award.

Since then, the Liberal-Nationals have refused to discuss any expansion of nurse-to-patient ratios, let alone legislating the existing ratios to prevent them being removed by future governments.

"It's a shame the Liberal-Nationals don't listen directly to the needs of their frontline nurses and midwives and seriously put patient safety first by expanding and improving mandated nursing hours," Mr Holmes said.

"According to the Liberal-Nationals announcement 320,000 extra patients will attend an emergency department over the next four years, yet there is currently no nurse-to-patient ratios guaranteed in those emergency departments to keep patients safe.



“Given the millions of dollars in cuts to federal health funding identified in the federal budget last year, we are sceptical about how the Liberal-Nationals intend to honour all of their health and hospital commitments, particularly in 2017-18 when the full impact of the federal health funding cuts take effect.

“At the end of the day, our nursing and midwifery members are passionate advocates for the delivery of safe patient care across our health system, regardless of their postcode.

“They want reassurance that their employer, NSW Health, is doing all that it can to ensure public hospitals are staffed appropriately and are delivering the best possible outcomes for patients.

“Last week, the NSWNMA challenged the Liberal-Nationals Coalition to match or better the election pledge by NSW Labor in providing mandated nurse-to-patient ratios or nursing hours and enshrining them into law, clearly the Liberal-Nationals have ignored our members calls,” said Mr Holmes.

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