



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

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

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## Nurses and midwives seek fair go for public health from Baird government

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has congratulated the Liberal-National Coalition on its return to office following Saturday's general election and reiterated its call for the state's world-class public health system to be maintained and not privatised in the future.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said he was happy to give credit to Premier Mike Baird's team and looked forward to more robust discussions with the Health Minister over the delivery of safe patient care on behalf of 60,000 nurses and midwives from across NSW.

"Our members have been working tirelessly to provide the best possible nursing care to their patients, regardless of their geographical location, because they are passionate, highly-skilled professionals who constantly go beyond the call of duty," Mr Holmes said.

"They remain extremely concerned about the additional pressures placed on nursing staff and other hospital employees, as Local Health Districts are forced to streamline services and drive down costs to maintain their budget bottom lines.

"Public health care is a right, not a privilege in this country and we must ensure our public hospital system is appropriately resourced and able to meet projected patient demands."

Mr Holmes said the NSWNMA stood by its election campaign platform of opposing the privatisation of public hospitals and health services.

"There is an undeniable pattern of privatisation emerging in NSW. The Liberal-National Coalition has begun privatising sub-acute and rehabilitation mental health services, new palliative care services, with disability and home care services to be privatised by 2018," Mr Holmes said.

"We will continue to stand behind our nurses and midwives and fight for the preservation of a world-class public health system throughout NSW.

"Today, we are calling on the Liberal-National Coalition to immediately release the details of its \$600 million contract with private operator, Healthscope, to build and run the Northern Beaches Hospital for a period of 20 years. Local nurses and midwives should know what their future holds.

"The Liberal-National Coalition must be upfront with the people of this state and openly discuss the planning details of the new Maitland Hospital at Metford and what will occur at the existing hospital site.

"The people of Rouse Hill and surrounding areas have a right to know now if their proposed new hospital will be a Public-Private Partnership (PPP), just as residents of Byron Bay and Mullumbimby deserve to know if the government will privatise surgical services at the Byron Central Hospital.



“As long as the Liberal-National Coalition continues to pursue PPPs in health, over the delivery of a robust public health system, we will continue to exercise our democratic right and oppose it.”

Assistant General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Judith Kiejda said the Association would continue to seek, as in previous years, expanded and mandated nurse-to-patient ratios across all public hospital settings and specialty units in the interests of increased patient safety.

“Patient safety runs at the core of our profession and we will not give up lobbying around the need to ensure safe patient care is delivered to all patients, from newborns entering our world to elderly residents reaching a dignified end to their journey,” said Ms Kiejda.

“The international research which supports our claim for nurse-to-patient ratios will only continue to expand and we are committed to digging in for the long haul to improve nurse-to-patient ratios, using the ‘nursing hours per patient day’ model if necessary, until they are mandated statewide and secured in legislation.

“The Health Minister should be open with the nurses and midwives of NSW and outline exactly where the additional 2,100 full-time equivalent nursing and midwifery positions and 360 specialised positions, guaranteed during the election campaign, will be allocated.

“It’s one thing to promise an increase to frontline services, it’s another to ensure they address the ongoing workload issues that have plagued the public hospital system for several years.

“Our members work on the frontline every day and they know the difference improved nurse-to-patient ratios, delivered by mandated nursing hours per patient, would make to safe patient care.”

Mr Holmes said he was proud of the resilience demonstrated by NSWNMA members, despite them being accused of ‘scaremongering’ and he reiterated that efforts to achieve safe patient care across the system would continue.

“I’m sure there will be plenty more robust discussions between the NSWNMA and the Ministry of Health over the future of public health service delivery in NSW,” Mr Holmes said.

“We will continue to uphold the interests of our nursing and midwifery members and the patients they care for, by telling it exactly like it is.”

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