



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Public hospital privatisation a sad day for NSW

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) is appalled at today's announcement by the NSW Coalition Government to privatise five major regional public hospitals: Maitland, Wyong, Goulburn, Shellharbour and Bowral.

The public-private partnerships will directly affect staff, who may not be offered positions at the new hospitals and would have little choice of alternatives in the areas. Patients are also at risk of a reduction in safe patient care.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said the NSW public had a right to know that the government is effectively selling off public hospitals by entering into partnerships with private operators.

"This is a sad day for the public hospital system of NSW and confirms that the Baird Government has an agenda to privatise more public hospitals throughout the state. There is a loss of government ministerial accountability when private operators are involved in managing government money. Private operators owe a duty to shareholders, so there is financial responsibility to deliver profit on investment. We're extremely concerned about patient care in the long run, as no large private hospital operator has been prepared to agree to nurse to patient ratios anywhere in NSW. Without these, patient safety is dependent upon budget, and now profit, to determine staffing levels," said Mr Holmes.

"Today, the Premier has chosen to turn his back on the people of NSW, blatantly ignoring the rights of workers and the community. In June, he introduced a regulation that terminated the redundancy entitlements of public servants who are transferred to the non-government sector. Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner has stipulated in her media release that only permanent staff will be offered a position, provided an equivalent job exists. Those who are not eligible will forfeit any kind of redundancy they were entitled to under the public system. Casual staff have limited rights in this situation."

"Local nurses and midwives remain in the dark about their future working conditions and entitlements, with only a two-year employment guarantee offered and no opportunity to negotiate. There was absolutely no warning or consultation with the NSWNMA or our members prior to today's announcement.

"Not only has this government shut the community out of the decision making process, they've forced hundreds of professional nursing and midwifery staff to wait on the sidelines as their future prospects are discussed without consulting them.

"We've been campaigning hard against the privatisation of the state's public hospitals on behalf of our members but also on behalf of the community. Privatised public hospital models have a history of failure in Australia – we all know how badly Port Macquarie Base Hospital failed under a similar arrangement. Private operators promise to deliver cheaper services but then have to come back to Government to ask for more money because they underestimated demand. Governments pay up or have to take back control and pay large compensation to Private Companies.



“We have warned the NSW Health Minister repeatedly of the dire consequences if safe patient care is compromised as a result of nurse-to-patient ratios not being introduced and mandated – by making these deals with the private sector, that do not enforce nurse-to-patient ratios, the Minister is abrogating her duty of care to the people of this state.”

The NSWNMA will continue to campaign on behalf of its members and oppose the privatisation of all NSW public hospitals as well as educate the community about threats to the future of public health services.

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