



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Critical midwifery shortage at Wollongong Hospital prompts community campaign

Wollongong Hospital branch of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has today called for urgent intervention by the NSW Minister for Health to help resolve serious understaffing issues hampering maternity services at Wollongong Hospital.

During a community morning tea to raise awareness of the region's critical midwifery shortage, NSWNMA members outlined the length of time they had raised concerns with Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District and the little improvement that followed.

President of NSWNMA Wollongong Hospital branch, Denis Wann, said all levels of the Local Health District were well aware of concerns within the hospital's maternity services, yet the problems still remained.

"For some time, we have been raising grave concerns about staffing shortages and the impact this is having on midwives being able to deliver the best possible care to both expectant mothers and new mums in the region," Mr Wann said.

"For many months, we have been calling for full-time equivalent midwifery vacancies to be filled and for non-clinical administrative support to be improved, so that midwives can focus on crucial antenatal and postnatal care, not to mention the care necessary during labour and delivery."

A review of BirthRate Plus, the tool used to determine workforce requirements, in March 2016 identified the need for at least 10 new midwives at Wollongong Hospital. At the time, the hospital was already around 10 full-time equivalent midwives short, and more resignations followed as a result of the understaffing.

"We've got a situation now where midwives are burning out and the skill mix and expertise of new recruits is low because they are not being offered the necessary guidance of enough clinical educators," said Mr Wann.

"We cannot continue to have situations where one midwife is required to care for up to 28 patients, it's simply not safe. There are also heightened concerns that new mothers are only receiving the bare minimum of postnatal care, prompting readmissions.

"Wollongong Hospital is a tertiary referral hospital and as the only major birthing site in the region north of Shoalhaven, it should be providing a much higher standard to the community, and that's why we are calling on the Health Minister to urgently intervene."

The NSWNMA said it welcomed the support from local community group, Better Births Illawarra, and encouraged members of the public to contact local Members of Parliament to also intervene.

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