



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

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

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## Lack of ratios putting patient's lives at risk

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) will tonight launch a public awareness campaign, stressing the urgent need for ratios in NSW public hospitals.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said the NSW Government could no longer continue to ignore the link between nurse staffing levels and improved patient outcomes.

"We know ratios save lives. Research has shown that every additional patient per nurse can increase the likelihood of an inpatient dying by seven per cent. The state government must put this system in place to safeguard the future of our public health system," Mr Holmes said.

"Year on year, presentations to our public hospitals rise and nurses and midwives are being forced to take on that increased workload. It's not right and it's not safe. Better, more transparent nurse-to-patient ratios are needed in NSW for nurses and midwives to deliver safer care to patients

"Thousands of hours of nursing care have been withheld from patients due to understaffing in NSW public hospitals. Our ratios campaign highlights the pressure nurses and midwives are under as a result."

In a recent survey of 2,500 nurses and midwives working in the public sector across NSW, seven in 10 said they'd seriously thought about leaving the profession, with almost all citing workloads and inadequate staffing levels as the cause.

Patient safety was a major concern for 73 per cent, with over 90 per cent believing ratios would improve patient safety and workloads.

"By 2030, a shortfall of 8,000 full-time registered nurses and midwives is predicted, according to the government's own data.

"If mandated staffing systems are not in place, we risk losing valuable trained nursing and midwifery staff to stress and burnout. They're some of our most valued workers who do the best they can in impossible circumstances, so why won't this government stand by them and their patients by introducing improved ratios?"

In 2011, the NSWNMA won some mandated nurse-to-patient ratios, yet since then the NSW Government has not delivered a second phase of ratios to extend them to rural and regional hospitals or into specialty areas, such as emergency departments, critical care units or paediatrics.

Victoria and Queensland have made nurse-to-patient ratios law. NSW not only lags behind but has destabilised the same laws it agreed to implement.



“Over the past 12 months in six NSW hospitals alone, we have uncovered at least 26,000 hours of missed clinical nursing care as a result of a manipulation of the Award to save costs. The staffing system as it currently stands isn't working. Better, more transparent ratios are needed to deliver safe patient care,” Mr Holmes said.

The NSWNMA's Ratios Claim is asking for 1 nurse to 3 patients in emergency departments, paediatric wards and critical care units; a minimum of 1 to 4 in rural and regional hospital wards; an improvement of ratios in mental health and rehabilitation units; and for babies to be counted in the ratios on maternity wards.

The media campaign *Ratios: It's a matter of life or death* commences on TV this evening, followed by radio advertising in the coming weeks.

The NSWNMA and its members will be asking all state politicians to back the claim and support ratios in all NSW public hospitals.

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