



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

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Overloaded emergency departments desperate for ratios

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has renewed calls for a 1:3 nurse-to-patient ratio to be introduced in all emergency departments (ED), as the number of presentations continues to rise across NSW public hospitals.

According to the Bureau of Health Information (BHI) quarterly report released today, there were more than 749,500 ED presentations statewide in October to December last year, up 24,806 (or 3.4 per cent) from the same quarter in 2017.

The BHI quarterly figures show the pressure on EDs is not confined to the major metropolitan public hospitals and has continued to grow rapidly in regional areas.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said there was a clear need for a reliable nurse-to-patient ratios system, guaranteed in law, to help manage the ongoing demand being felt across the state.

"The strain that's evident in our public hospitals has been taking a huge toll on nurses and midwives who do their best to deliver safe patient care at the bedside," said Mr Holmes.

"Many regional hospitals continue to experience a higher volume of patients, yet under the current staffing model those patients receive less nursing hours compared to their city counterparts. It is unacceptable patients are disadvantaged simply for living outside of the city."

Port Macquarie Base Hospital was one of the busiest sites, with a 12.9 per cent jump in ED presentations compared to the same period the previous year.

Other regional hospitals to experience increases in ED presentations for the quarter included Lismore (up 12.4%), Lithgow (up 12.3%), Deniliquin (up 12.2%), Wagga Wagga (up 11.8%) and Forbes (up 11.5%).

Across metropolitan Sydney, Campbelltown (10.5%) and Sutherland (10.1%) Hospitals reported significant increases in ED attendances for the quarter.

"Currently in NSW, there are no minimum nurse-to-patient ratios in our EDs or children's wards, with no mandated ratio for each shift," Mr Holmes said.

"We need a new, reliable shift-by-shift ratios system to provide a clear understanding of how many patients nurses have to care for," Mr Holmes said.

In the lead up to the March 23 state election, the NSWNMA is campaigning for mandated nurse-to-patient ratios in every ward, on every shift, across all public hospitals.

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