



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

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Mental Health receives long-awaited ratios attention

Tears of gratitude have filled the eyes of experienced mental health nurses today, following NSW Labor's announcement it would introduce nursing ratios into 37 adult acute inpatient mental health units across the state, if elected to government on 23 March.

Recognising the significance of dedicated mental health nursing ratios, Brett Holmes, General Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), immediately welcomed NSW Labor's election commitment and encouraged the Liberal-Nationals coalition to follow suit.

"Not only would this make a huge difference to the working lives of so many mental health nurses, it would vastly improve the safe levels of care afforded to patients receiving treatment within these settings," said Mr Holmes.

"It's no secret adult acute inpatient mental health units around the state are challenging environments to work in.

"Patient safety and the safety of staff should be paramount in these units and that's only possible if you have the right nurse-to-patient ratios in place and enough staff to conduct vital patient assessments.

"For too long our mental health nurses have had to struggle with ongoing understaffing, excessive workloads and poor skill mix issues.

"Mental health nurses are burning out under the pressure and they are already in short supply. Introducing nurse-to-patient ratios will also encourage more nurses to work in mental health.

"It's a credit to the current Labor leadership for recognising the systemic issues plaguing our mental health services in NSW and for beginning the task of righting this wrong."

Mr Holmes said Labor's pledge would deliver nurse-to-patient ratios of 1:4 on morning and afternoon shifts, and 1:7 on night shifts, as well as an in charge nurse in addition across all shifts.

"Observations are a critical element in adult acute inpatient mental health units," Mr Holmes said.

"Under Labor's promise, additional mental health nurses would be required to ensure those patients on level one observations receive one-to-one care. While patients requiring level two observations would receive one-to-two care.

"These new nurse-to-patient ratios would apply as a minimum across the entire adult acute inpatient mental health unit and, importantly, would be consistent for regional and metropolitan sites."

Mr Holmes said reliable, more transparent nurse-to-patient ratios were urgently needed across the state to help deliver safe care to patients and reiterated calls for the Liberal-Nationals coalition to match NSW Labor's promise.



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