



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

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NSW emergency departments busier than ever

Presentations to emergency departments in the state's public hospitals hit an all-time high during the recent winter period, vindicating calls by the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) for urgent extra nursing staff to meet growing demand.

According to the latest [Bureau of Health Information \(BHI\) quarterly report](#), emergency presentations rose across all 15 Local Health Districts during July to September this year, while the patients presenting were also acutely unwell.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, said the ongoing strain on emergency departments and the need for more nurses to keep up with unprecedented demand was evident.

"It's clear our public hospital system is in desperate need of a new nurse-to-patient ratios system to manage demand more effectively, including a ratio of one nurse to three patients in our emergency departments," said Mr Holmes.

"Year after year, the pressure on emergency departments has continued to build and it's taking a toll on nurses. The BHI data shows presentations are rising, yet nurses and other hospital staff are simply asked to absorb the increased workloads.

"It's unsustainable and frankly, it's unsafe. The government is stubbornly relying on a staffing model that we all know can be manipulated to save hospital costs.

"Unlike Victoria and Queensland, we have no minimum nurse-to-patient ratios in our emergency departments or children's wards, and the number of nurses can be averaged over a week with no mandated ratio for each shift."

Port Macquarie Base Hospital was one of the busiest in the state, after it experienced a 22% increase in emergency department presentations compared to the same time last year. Dubbo Base Hospital in Western NSW Local Health District recorded a 16% rise in its emergency department attendances, while Mount Druitt Hospital in Western Sydney had an increase of 11.5% in presentations.

According to the BHI data, a record number of elective surgery procedures also occurred during the July to September quarter, indicating a heavy reliance on the already strained public health system.

"The government claimed it would hire thousands of extra nurses and midwives at the March election, but details of when and where all of those positions will be rolled out won't be announced," Mr Holmes said.

"Our regional hospitals are left wondering when they will receive extra nursing staff, despite their emergency departments and surgical wards experiencing an influx of patients, year after year."

The NSWNMA is continuing its campaign for mandated nurse-to-patient ratios on every shift, across all hospitals throughout NSW.

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