



# NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## 600 nurses stood down after elective surgery misfire, more to follow

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has heard more than **600 private hospital nurses have been stood down over the past 24 hours**, and hundreds more could follow, all casualties of the Federal Government's bungled announcement regarding non-urgent elective surgery.

Nurses employed by Health Care, the third largest private hospital operator in the state, behind Ramsay Health Care and Healthscope, were notified by letter that they would not have work to support themselves and their families for the next four weeks.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, has this afternoon issued a scathing rebuke of the Federal Government's mishandling of the decision to cancel non-urgent elective surgery, including Health Minister Greg Hunt, for failing to consider the dire workforce consequences.

"We've now got a situation where more than 600 nurses are being forced to take accrued leave, or are scrambling to find another job elsewhere, before needing to join the queue for benefits," Mr Holmes said.

"We know nurses at Forster Private Hospital on the Mid North Coast have been stood down and also nurses at Hirondele Private Hospital at Chatswood on Sydney's Lower North Shore.

"Wednesday's announcement by the Federal Government to suspend all elective surgery, other than category 1 and urgent category 2 cases, sent shockwaves through private hospital sector nursing staff.

"By Wednesday evening, the Federal Government conceded it had rushed the decision and subsequently postponed the changes until midnight on 1 April, but the damage was already done.

"Even today, Ramsay Health Care has taken matters into its own hands and will cease all semi-urgent category 2 and all category 3 elective surgeries at all Ramsay surgical sites from midnight tonight.

"With little time to negotiate logistics around the distribution of any resources to the public hospital sector, private hospital employers have taken the drastic step of laying off their highly skilled, lifesaving workforce in the middle of a global health crisis. It's unspeakable.

"We are calling on the Federal Government to fix the mess it has made, by way of legislation and funding, to ensure we do not see the capacity of our public and private health services diminished overnight.

"This is the time our public and private hospitals need to work together and share the load for the delivery of essential health care.

"There needs to be a sustainable plan to maintain the private hospital system capacity, so they can work continuously and support public hospitals in response to the evolving COVID-19 crisis."

The NSWNMA is providing advice and support to impacted members concerned about their workplace rights and entitlements.



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