



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

General Secretary: Brett Holmes | Assistant General Secretary: Judith Kiejda  
P (02) 8595 1234 f [www.facebook.com/nswnma](http://www.facebook.com/nswnma) t [twitter.com/nswnma](https://twitter.com/nswnma)

16 September 2020

## **Elective surgery backlog needs extra hands**

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) is urging the NSW Government to bring forward the delivery of extra nurses to help cope with the elective surgery waiting list backlog due to COVID-19.

The latest Bureau of Health Information (BHI) data shows the number of elective surgery procedures dropped by almost 60 per cent per week in NSW during the height of COVID-19 in March and April.

With more than 100,000 patients stuck on waiting lists at the end of June, NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, said it was imperative the government increased the nursing workforce now to assist with tackling the backlog over coming months.

"There's no denying the COVID-19 pandemic had a ripple effect through our public and private hospitals, and we know elective surgery declined sharply from 26 March, when the Federal Government was forced to put the brakes on," said Mr Holmes.

"In late April, some additional elective surgery procedures were permitted and by mid-May a three-stage pathway for further elective surgeries was rolled out.

"That said, the BHI data shows there were 101,026 elective surgery patients stuck on waiting lists, up 20.1 per cent compared to the same period last year.

"Our members are telling us activity has ramped up in their operating theatres, with the Ministry of Health confirming they are working at more than 100 per cent capacity. We are also aware of the pressure to rapidly catch-up the waiting list backlog during the December-January holiday period.

"We're urging the government to bring forward the roll-out of extra nursing staff now if they intend go down this path, rather than relying on nurses to pick up the pace and the overtime needed, under current staffing.

"This government has been exploiting the goodwill of nurses and midwives for too long. They've been on the frontline, keeping us all safe during this one in a hundred year pandemic, and now they're expected to simply keep going.

"Nurses and midwives already feel unsupported and undervalued, thanks to the government's cruel wage freeze.

"It's time this government started paying attention to the health and wellbeing of its own public sector workforce, instead of making their lives harder thanks to poor economic policy decisions on the run."

---

### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Brett Holmes, General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 550 324

Judith Kiejda, Assistant General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 674 119

Gia Hayne, Media Advisor, NSWNMA 0488 015 317