



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

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Hundreds of nursing care hours lost across the Illawarra

Analysis of hospital data has revealed patients in Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District missed out on hundreds of nursing care hours, due to widespread under-staffing in the region's public hospitals.

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has uncovered 1,622 hours of care were withheld from patients across multiple wards and units at Wollongong, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven, Coledale, David Berry and Milton Ulladulla hospitals, over four weeks during late April and into May.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, said the amount of care withheld was the equivalent of 203 nursing shifts, spread across medical and surgical wards, acute geriatrics and mental health units.

"Nurses and midwives are being pushed to breaking point because there's not enough of them being rostered on to meet the demand," said Mr Holmes.

"Presentations are increasing across local hospitals but staffing inside the wards and units has not improved. When sick leave can't be replaced, the nurses or midwives on shift must carry the extra workloads.

"This evidence of nursing hours being withheld from local patients at Wollongong, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven and David Berry hospitals is a significant breach of the minimum care required under the state Award.

"Public hospitals must provide a minimum number of nursing hours per patient each day, yet Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District has ignored its obligation to provide this.

"Patients have effectively been short-changed on the safe nursing care they should've received. It's simply not acceptable."

NSWNMA Shoalhaven District Hospital Branch President, Michael Clarke, said the amount of care withheld because nursing shifts had not been rostered was unacceptable and jeopardised the delivery of safe patient care.

"Shift-by-shift ratios are the only way to guarantee there will be enough nurses and midwives to give patients the best possible care. It's time the NSW government acknowledged this and introduced safe staffing now," said Mr Clarke.

"Our communities of the Illawarra and Shoalhaven deserve better."

The NSWNMA is seeking safe staffing improvements in all public hospitals and fair pay for nurses and midwives across NSW.

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