



31 August, 2021

The inconvenient truth about nurse shortages

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association proudly represents over 73,000 nurses and midwives across the state. As frontline workers, our members have been shouldering the burden of the pandemic, working their guts out to hold the health system together.

Many have gathered the courage to come forward publicly and speak about their experiences, bringing attention to staffing issues that are putting themselves, their families, patients and residents at risk.

What is not helpful, is the NSW Health Minister publicly dismissing these concerns and continuing to deny the fact our hospital system is at risk of reaching a breaking point.

Our members are telling an inconvenient truth. One the NSW Health Minister refuses to acknowledge.

The fact is, in addition to the increased stresses of COVID-19, nurses and midwives are dealing with a significant reduction in staffing from forced isolation and redeployment of nurses to COVID-19 vaccination hubs, testing clinics and quarantine hotels.

Every day, as case numbers continue to rise, nurses and midwives are putting themselves and their families at risk, without enough support to do their jobs.

Right now, 871 COVID-19 positive patients are in hospital in NSW, with 143 of those in intensive care units (ICU), needing one-to-one care. This puts an incredible strain on those who remain in our public hospital system.

It's time the NSW government listened to what's really going on in our public health system. Nurses and midwives are fatigued, burnt out and feel unsupported at work. We will lose some of our most valuable workers if the NSW Health Minister doesn't wake up to the crisis we are facing and offer more support.

We call on the Ministry of Health to start utilising any nurses who were upskilled with critical care training last year while we still have experienced ICU nurses able to offer the guidance and clinical supervision that's needed to care for COVID-19 positive patients, before the October peak hits.

Our ICUs and the entire public health system was under strain before this pandemic, with excessive overtime and poor staffing ratios.

The current workloads are unsustainable. Enough is enough. The NSW government can't continue to ignore the pleas from frontline workers and blame unions for giving our members a voice.

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