



31 December 2021

Abuse of overwhelmed health staff misdirected this NYE

As the state prepares to welcome in the New Year, nurses and midwives have been coping increased levels of abuse inside hospitals as they struggle to deliver care with massive staffing shortages.

A lack of available nurses at one major Sydney hospital has prompted calls for patients to be discharged as soon as possible, and for doctors to be on standby to replace or support nurses.

At another major metropolitan hospital, three registered nurses were caring for up to 18 critically unwell coronary patients. Meanwhile, just three midwives were on hand to support 14 labouring women. Midwives were also being subjected to abuse and complaints over a lack of staff available to perform inductions on the maternity ward.

Brett Holmes, General Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), said abuse and aggression towards health workers must stop immediately and urged the NSW government intervene.

"Our members are faced with an impossible task of trying to care for rising COVID-19 hospitalisations, as well as other emergency presentations, and not enough staff to provide safe care," said Mr Holmes.

"The government keeps insisting our health system is strong enough to cope, when that is simply not the reality on the ground. Our members insist it is becoming incredibly unsafe.

"We're aware nurses, midwives and other health staff are overwhelmed at multiple hospitals already, and they're not looking forward to what the New Year's Eve festivities could bring through the doors.

"Patients and family members are presenting to hospital expecting a robust, high-functioning health system and become extremely agitated when they experience the widespread staffing crisis firsthand.

"Our members want the NSW Premier and Health Minister to admit the current situation in our hospitals is dire and call on the public not to abuse health staff as the system struggles under increased demand.

"These circumstances are devastating enough for our nursing and midwifery workforce, which is already grappling with pandemic fatigue and little hope of any reprieve in sight."

The NSWNMA has once again urged the NSW government to introduce a shift-by-shift COVID-19 allowance to provide nurses and midwives an incentive, given the extraordinary conditions they are experiencing.

"Currently, there are no incentives for staff to keep fronting up, day after day, and being expected to cover these massive staffing shortfalls," Mr Holmes added.

"We called on the Health Minister to introduce a COVID-19 allowance for nurses and midwives, in line with the Victoria government's allowance, back in October and received no response.



NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association

Media Release

“Surely, the Health Minister and Premier can acknowledge they do need to give immediate, meaningful recognition to the ongoing sacrifices nurses and midwives are making and what is happening to our health system because of their own government’s decisions.

“Our members are going above and beyond, shift after shift. Despite everything that is being thrown their way. Enough is enough. The government cannot continue piling more upon nurses and midwives and ignore the conditions they are dealing with.”

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