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Burnt out nurses and midwives deflated by no staffing ratios

Thousands of public sector nurses and midwives have been left wondering when the NSW government will genuinely address the serious workloads and staffing crisis impacting the state's health system.

Off the back of two statewide strikes this year, members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) called for urgent investment into the health workforce and an introduction of shift by shift ratios to deliver safe patient care.

NSWNMA Acting General Secretary, Shaye Candish, said today's pre-budget workforce announcement was a welcome start, but lacked details on how many nurses and midwives would actually be recruited, when it would be rolled out, or where they would go once recruited.

"At a time when our health system is under unprecedented demand, any injection of new nurses and midwives into the system is welcome, but we've got very little specifics and there's no mention of nurse-to-patient ratios, which is what our members are desperately seeking," said Ms Candish.

"We need shift by shift ratios in NSW to deliver safe staffing and improve the working conditions of those who have endured so much while keeping our communities safe.

"It took two statewide strikes for this government to acknowledge they needed to act, but today's announcement has raised more questions and left thousands of health professionals in the dark.

"Given growing cost of living pressures, the government's one-off \$3,000 'thank you' payment will be welcomed by our members, but it won't help with their cost of living in two months or another two years' time.

"There's also no clarity if casual nursing staff or those on temporary contracts will receive this payment, many of whom worked beyond fulltime hours in this pandemic to help their workplaces and communities. It would be deplorable if these hardworking nurses and midwives were arbitrarily excluded."

NSWNMA Acting Assistant General Secretary, Michael Whaites, said confirmation the government's draconian wages policy would rise from 2.5 to 3 per cent this year was a slap in the face for public sector workers.

"No one can argue that nurses and midwives are not deserving of fair and equitable remuneration for the working conditions they are continuing to persevere through," said Mr Whaites.

"The government's new 3 per cent wages cap is a slap in face and doesn't even come close to the current inflation rate, which will leave nurses and midwives' real wages going backwards.

"We sought a modest pay rise of 4.75 per cent, given the wage freeze our members suffered in 2020. They will be insulted by the 3 per cent offer and hints of a further 0.5 per cent next year if they promise to work even harder.

"NSW needs a government willing to be transparent and accountable. Today's announcements achieve neither of these things and further highlight how out of touch they are with issues facing our state's health workforce."



NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association

Media Release

The NSWNMA has confirmed it will meet with the Ministry of Health this week and will seek further meetings with the Health Minister to explain the government's plan.

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