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'Smoke and mirrors' for hardworking nurses and midwives

Many nurses and midwives who worked tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic will likely miss out on the NSW government's planned one-off \$3,000 'thank you' payment and questions remain about the 'record' 10,000 health workforce also announced earlier this week.

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) sought further details on the payment and specifics around the pre-budget workforce 'boost', after fielding a wide range of queries from public and private sector members and community supporters.

Following talks with NSW Ministry of Health officials, NSWNMA Acting General Secretary, Shaye Candish, said it appeared a large number of nurses and midwives, who worked extraordinarily throughout the pandemic, would not be eligible for the 'thank you' payment.

"It beggars' belief how little thought has gone into this announcement given the vast efforts of all healthcare workers who sacrificed themselves to keep NSW communities safe," said Ms Candish.

"Alarmingly, we are yet to have any clarification for private sector or aged care nurses who helped to support the public system, but we now know the \$3,000 isn't all as it seems for public sector health workers either.

"We're told the one-off payment will be taxed, have superannuation taken out, and only apply pro rata for casuals or part-time staff averaged out over the last financial year.

"We're calling on the NSW Premier to take another look at this pre-budget announcement, ensure all healthcare workers are recognised for their tremendous resilience and valued equitably across the board."

Further transparency questions were also raised about the NSW government's 10,148 full-time equivalent staffing enhancement announcement, and NSWNMA Acting Assistant General Secretary, Michael Whaites, said double counting of previous announcements was apparent.

"We are seeking further clarification from the Health Minister and Ministry, but we have been told that figure does include the NSW Ambulance and palliative care announcements, as well as at least 1,600 nurses and midwives yet to be recruited from the 5,000 nurses and midwives promised back in 2019," said Mr Whaites.

"We still have no detail on how many new nurses and midwives are within this announcement, where they will be allocated, or when they will be recruited.

"There's no guarantee all 10,148 positions will actually be recruited because the government intends to allocate funds to Local Health Districts to use at their own discretion.

"It's really disappointing, when clinicians have repeatedly asked for their concerns to be addressed, in order to provide the best possible care to the people of NSW, and the government and opposition repeatedly fail to listen."

The NSWNMA reiterated calls for an introduction of shift by shift ratios to deliver safe patient care and improve working conditions for staff. As well as open and transparent investment into the nursing and midwifery workforce in NSW.



NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association

Media Release

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