



22 June 2022

Nurses and midwives to stop work over NSW budget-FAIL

Hundreds of nurses and midwives will stop work next week to take part in a mass meeting of NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) members, furious at the NSW government's failure to address the urgent need for shift by shift staffing ratios.

NSWNMA members believe health policies confirmed in the 2022-23 NSW budget yesterday were more smoke and mirrors by the NSW government, and would not fix the healthcare crisis.

NSWNMA Acting General Secretary, Shaye Candish, said many questions remained unanswered regarding the actual number of full-time equivalent nurses and midwives to be added to the workforce, given Local Health Districts would be given funds to spend at their discretion.

"The sheer lack of transparency is palpable. There are widespread staffing deficits right across the state now and there is no guarantee that the government's 'health workforce boost' will be utilised to plug gaps in the staffing rosters now," said Ms Candish.

"We need fundamental reform of our healthcare system. We need ratios, alongside transparent spending of taxpayer dollars to ensure NSW receives the right patient care, not more unaccountable cash being thrown about, without any guarantee of meaningful staffing solutions."

"We will continue to review the budget and push for answers, but on early review we are not confident it will address the current workforce fatigue, or the ongoing issue of attracting and retaining nurses and midwives in NSW.

"Despite acknowledging widespread 'aftershocks' across the health system from the pandemic and current flu season, the government has ignored the need to address the extra extreme workloads nurses and midwives are juggling.

"The rural and remote incentive packages are welcome however we still need details of how this will apply to nursing and midwifery.

"We hope these packages will assist recruitment, but our members tell us the best way to keep them working in rural and remote NSW is to ensure they can practice safely. They can only do this if their workload is reasonable, and there's nothing in the package that tells us this will happen.

"We asked for one extra nurse every evening and night shift in remote sites, and the government has said no to this request."

NSWNMA Acting Assistant General Secretary, Michael Whaites, said while more money into bank accounts was welcome, the one-off 'thank you' payment would not help with ongoing cost of living pressures, and coupled with a real pay cut under the new 3 per cent wages policy, members were not impressed.

"The 'thank you' payment does very little to recognise the sacrifices and moral injury our members endured throughout the pandemic, which we all know extends across the entire health system, not just public hospitals," said Mr Whaites.

"There are many who helped this state in its time of need that will not get this payment, those who burnt out and left, those in the private and aged care sectors. Those members are rightly feeling undervalued.



“But instead of listening to nurses and midwives, the clinicians on the ground who are best placed to outline the issues and solutions, the NSW government has ignored them and their calls for safe staffing ratios on every shift.

“Given the workforce constraints being felt here and in other jurisdictions, it’s a woeful oversight by the Premier and his government to not consider phasing nurse-to-patient ratios into specialty areas on a shift by shift basis, where its own hospital data shows ratios are desperately needed.

“Emergency departments, intensive care units, maternity, paediatrics, inpatient mental health, all of these areas and more have been significantly disrupted during the pandemic and chronic staffing shortages exposed, yet they’ve failed to attract a mention in this budget.

“This is why our members will gather for a mass meeting next week and discuss their next steps in our campaign to improve patient safety in our hospitals with shift by shift staffing ratios.”

Over 70 NSWNMA public sector branches have voted to stop work for various hours (from 2hrs to 24hrs) and participate in a mass meeting of members next Tuesday, 28 June. Branches that have voted for extended stop work periods demonstrate the widespread dissatisfaction with the NSW government’s budget, and a lack of confidence the announcements will improve patient safety.

A further 16 branches voted in support of the stop work action but due to severe staffing shortages and a commitment to life-preserving care are unable to participate.

A mass meeting will be held at Sydney Town Hall from 2pm and broadcast to a number of regional locations.

The NSWNMA has not ruled out further action in the lead up to the state election in March 2023.

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