



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Ratios are a matter of life or death

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) will highlight the urgent need for nurse-to-patient ratios in public hospitals when the next stage of its campaign launches tonight.

The campaign begins with patients in pain calling out for a nurse in a busy hospital with the words '*underfunded, understaffed, unsafe*', followed by the statement: '*In children's wards and Emergency, mandated nurse-to-patient ratios do not exist*'.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said the message provided a clear reason of the need for a new nurse-to-patient ratios system in our public hospitals.

"In Emergency Departments and Paediatric wards staffing levels are critical - lives depend on it, yet there are no mandated ratios in these areas in NSW," Mr Holmes said.

"A new ratios system will mean guaranteed nurse-to-patient ratios in every ward, on every shift across all major and district NSW hospitals. This will give a clear understanding of how many patients nurses have to care for and provide patients with the level of care they deserve."

The media campaign will be broadcast on TV and radio across NSW, with a regional-specific version airing outside metro areas.

Mr Holmes said it was important to let the public know that less nursing-hours-per-patient are provided to those living in regional areas under the current staffing system.

"The *Public Health System Nurses' and Midwives' (State) Award* allocates five or five and a half nursing hours per patient to country hospitals, depending on their size, whereas bigger city hospitals get six hours."

"A patient's postcode should not define their level of care. Ratios will mean a patient recovering from a hip operation in a country hospital will receive the same amount of nursing care as a patient who has had the same operation in a big city hospital."

"Shift-by-shift ratios should be implemented across the state and extend to country hospitals in order to bring country staffing levels up to the city's."

The NSWNMA is asking for 1 nurse to 3 patients in emergency departments and paediatric wards; in critical care units, either 1 to 1 care or 1 nurse to 2 patients; a minimum of 1 to 4 in city and country hospital general medical /surgical wards; for babies to be counted in the ratios on maternity wards and for an improvement of ratios in mental health and rehabilitation units.

The media campaign *Ratios: It's a matter of life or death* commences on radio today and TV this evening.

As part of the ongoing campaign, NSWNMA members will hold a public rally outside NSW Parliament on **Tuesday, 18 September**, calling on the State Government to support nurse-to-patient ratios. So far, Labor, the Greens and Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party have all pledged support.



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