



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

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12 December, 2018

## **NSW midwives highlight dangerous maternity shortages**

Midwives from ten NSW hospitals will assemble in their own time at 12pm TODAY (12<sup>th</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup>) to highlight shortages within their maternity wards.

NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) members from **Royal Prince Alfred (RPAH), Royal North Shore (RNSH), Wollongong, Liverpool, Blacktown, Nepean Lismore, John Hunter, Tweed** and **Tamworth** Hospitals have backed an open letter to the NSW Minister for Health, Brad Hazzard, urging the NSW Government to implement mandated ratios in maternity services across all NSW public hospitals.

The current staffing system allows ongoing unfilled vacancies, which places mothers and their babies at risk and puts additional strain on staff and hospital resources. Currently, Royal Prince Alfred's (RPAH) Women and Children's service has 25 full-time equivalent vacancies.

Understaffing is having a negative effect on families because midwives lack time to provide the level of support and education new mothers need during the vital days following birth. As a result, breastfeeding rates in NSW have significantly declined by 8.4% since the current NSW Government came to power in 2011.

Midwives are asking for ratios of at least 1 midwife to 3 mothers in postnatal wards to provide a clear and accountable system that patients can rely on and midwives can trust at all times.

To date, the Berejiklian Government has refused to commit to a more transparent ratios system, which would deliver safer staffing to public hospitals across NSW.

Media are welcome to attend rallies at **RPAH** and **Wollongong**.

**WHEN:** 12pm, Wednesday, 12 December 2018

**WHAT:** Photo opportunity

**WHERE:** Outside **RPAH:** Corner John Hopkins Dr and Missenden Rd, Camperdown  
Outside **Wollongong Hospital**

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### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

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12 December, 2018

The Hon. Brad Hazzard  
Minister for Health

NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) midwives at the following hospitals: **Royal Prince Alfred (RPAH), Royal North Shore (RNSH), Wollongong, Liverpool, Blacktown, Nepean, John Hunter, Tweed, Lismore and Tamworth** are taking action today to urge you to implement mandated ratios in maternity services across all NSW public hospitals.

We stand united as midwives who can no longer rely on our current system to deliver a safe level of care to mothers and their babies. Currently, there are no ratios of midwives to mothers. This means some of us can be caring for up to 12 mothers PLUS their babies at any one time.

NSW families deserve better. It is dangerous and unsafe when our hospitals are operating understaffed. Mistakes can be made.

An important part of our job is to educate mothers and provide physical and emotional support to women and their babies. Yet, under the current staffing system, there is not enough time for us to provide the level of support and education new mothers need during these vital days. As a result, breastfeeding rates in NSW have significantly declined year on year [\(8.4%\) since 2011](#).

We are experiencing a [shortage of midwives in NSW](#), yet nothing is being done to improve our working conditions to encourage more midwives into the sector. In addition, there is a lack of support for younger midwives that rely on senior staff to pass on their skills.

This is being felt by all of us and will be felt by many new midwifery graduates entering the system each year. High vacancies and overtime means Educators and Midwifery Managers are constantly having to work on the floor. Without the ability for Educators to provide adequate training, midwives are failing to obtain the skills needed to support junior midwives.

Many of us are parents and will no longer stand by while mothers and their babies miss out on much needed midwifery care. All mothers in NSW, regardless of where they live, should have access to safe, quality care.

The staffing system in NSW public hospitals as it currently stands is broken. It is not being delivered on a shift-by-shift basis and we have found management is able to short staff wards because they can balance the hours over a week. We need better ratios of at least 1 midwife to 3 mothers in postnatal wards to provide a clear and accountable system that patients can rely on and midwives can trust at all times.

We hope you will listen to our concerns and those of other nurses and midwives across the state who urgently need a safer working environment to achieve the best outcomes for our patients and their families.

Yours Sincerely,

NSWNMA midwives