



**The Hon. Dominic Perrottet MP**

Premier of New South Wales

GPO Box 5341

SYDNEY NSW 2001

[admin@premier.nsw.gov.au](mailto:admin@premier.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Premier,

As the leaders of the Australian College of Midwives (ACM) and the Australian College of Nursing (ACN), we are writing to you to voice our support for the recent NurseKeeper initiative proposed by the NSW Greens to help address the exodus of nurses and midwives from the NSW health system.

Over the past months, both ACM and ACN have received an increasing volume of reports documenting the extreme conditions that nurses and midwives across NSW are having to endure. This includes 12 hours shifts in full PPE without breaks, sick leave being denied, institution of suboptimal health practices and gag orders put in place to limit the ability of nurses and midwives to speak out about their individual and collective trauma.

The result should not be surprising – nurses and midwives are leaving the profession at alarming rates. Coupled with past border restrictions and the lull in international students, it is estimated that over 20 000 nurses have exited the workforce in the past year alone. Midwives have been badly affected by policies at some hospital, such as limiting the access of partners to birthing suites, resulting in distress to patients and additional workload. Unless promptly and effectively addressed, the decline in numbers of nurses and midwives will seriously compromise the quality of healthcare in NSW and the sustainability of the NSW Health.

These reports, though shocking on their own, compound certain realities that have been existent for many years. For example, frontline hospital workers now routinely face more violence in the workplace than police officers and prison guards in the course of their duties. And in 2020, almost 25% of nurses and midwives in New South Wales reported inappropriate physical or sexual contact whilst at work.

Such a working environment is completely unacceptable and must be remedied. Coupled with the fact that nursing and midwifery remains 90% female in its make-up, it also reinforces the issues of gender and inequality that unfortunately pervade our health system.

Up until now much of the debate on improving working conditions has centred around ensuring specific ratios of nurses to patients. To be clear, ratios have a place in the debate, but they are not the panacea that will help solve the staffing crisis facing NSW Health.

Instead, we require immediate recognition of the nursing and midwifery professions and long-term planning for improving workplace conditions commensurate with their training and experience during the pandemic and beyond.

We urge the NSW government to support the NurseKeeper proposal and to work with key stakeholders on its implementation. We also suggest seeking agreement from the Commonwealth government to exempt NurseKeeper benefits from income tax.

ACN and the ACM stand ready to assist the NSW government in progressing this initiative and would welcome the opportunity to discuss other strategies to support nurses and midwives in NSW.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss or answer queries. Please contact [officeofthceo@acn.edu.au](mailto:officeofthceo@acn.edu.au) or contact ACN's Chief of Staff Tiffany King on 0428 421 434.

Yours sincerely,



**Adjunct Professor Kylie Ward FACN**  
Chief Executive Officer  
RN, MMgt, Dip App Sci (Nursing), Acute  
Care Cert, FCHSM(Hon), MAICD  
**Australian College of Nursing**



**Caroline Lamb**  
Chief Executive Officer  
BA, LLB, FCIS, MBioethics, GAICD.  
**Australian College of Midwives**

28 January 2022