



# The Hon Jillian Skinner MP

## Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

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### FACT SHEET

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June 2012

#### **NURSES & MIDWIVES**

This fact sheet provides information on what the government has done to deliver its commitment to increase nurse and midwife numbers and improve the quality of services they provide to patients.

#### **THE NURSING WORKFORCE – A PROFILE**

Nurses and midwives are a vital part of the NSW health system. They are critical to ensuring the delivery of quality, timely care to patients. Increasingly, nurses and midwives are required to be more skilled and have specialist qualifications, and are increasingly empowered to make front line decisions about patient care.

World-wide there is a shortage of qualified nurses and midwives. The NSW health system is actively recruiting nurses and midwives across the state. There is significant turnover of professional employment as nurses and midwives leave and re-enter the workforce depending on personal circumstances. The nursing workforce is also an ageing one, with the average age of a nurse in NSW being in the order of 43 years.

#### **NSW GOVERNMENT PROMISES IN RELATION TO THE NURSING WORKFORCE**

In May, the NSW Government delivered in full on its commitment to provide 2,475 extra nurses in its first term of government.

The government is further committed to spending \$47 million towards employing some 275 additional Clinical Nurse/Midwife Educators and Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialists over four years.

The government will implement a Ten Year Health Professional Workforce Plan which will provide a long-term strategy for the training, recruitment and retention of nursing staff.

#### **WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRESS TO DATE?**

The Government's first budget provided \$80 million to employ 900 more nurses by June 2012. An initial \$4 million toward additional Clinical Nurse/Midwife Educators and Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialists was also announced in the 2010-11 budget.

Since the election, there are 2,500 more nurses now working in the NSW health system.

The 2012 State Budget provided a further \$64 million to recruit approximately 500 additional nurses at public hospitals

The NSW Government has undertaken a number of initiatives in the last 15 months to address the shortage of nurses in the workforce and to reduce barriers to experienced nurses re-entering the workforce after a period of absence.

Some 20 Emergency Departments have additional resuscitation nurses. The government is delivering more nursing hours of direct patient care under agreed Award provisions.

The government's Re-Entry to Nursing initiative has provided funding for 60 re-entry scholarships valued at \$10,000 each for those wanting to re-enter the profession after a period of five to 10 years away from nursing.

The Minister has advocated strongly for the removal of other barriers preventing nurses re-entering the workforce, including difficulties in meeting the "recency of practice" standard.

On 19 March 2012 the NMBA approved a Re-Entry to Practice policy that includes a provision for nurses to undertake a three month period of supervised practice as a means of qualifying for re-entry.

The government recognises the increasing leadership role of nurses in health care delivery, and it has supported the **Essentials of Care** initiative which facilitates cultural change in the health workplace to the benefit of patients and staff. The government has also supported the **Take the Lead** initiative which promotes leadership among Nurse/Midwifery Unit Managers.