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NSW GOVERNMENT PLEDGES RECORD \$18 BILLION TO HEALTH

An extra \$1 billion will be invested in the NSW health system this year.

The investment is part of a record \$18.3 billion health budget that will improve services for patients and fund building programs at the state's hospitals and health facilities.

The Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, said the record spend on health is a 5.4 per cent increase compared to the previous year and will allow for the growing demand for hospital care.

The record investment in public health will provide for an extra 50,000 emergency department presentations, 30,000 additional acute inpatient services including 2,000 more elective surgery procedures, and improved intensive care services including:

- \$5.6 million for additional adult intensive care services at Gosford, Prince of Wales, Nepean and Liverpool Hospitals
- \$1.4 million for the Sydney Children's Hospital Network to enhance paediatric intensive care services to improve critical care services for children
- \$2.8 million for additional neonatal intensive care services at John Hunter Children's and Westmead Hospitals

On 1 July 2012 NSW begins the move to the new Activity Based Funding (ABF) model for public hospitals which will provide a clearer, more transparent basis for funding and comparing hospital costs.

The budget also delivers on the government's election commitments with \$5 million allocated to enhancing palliative care services and a further \$5 million to boost pain management services.

"I am especially pleased to be able to announce \$1 million for additional cochlear implants, predominantly for children," Mrs Skinner added.

"Before the election we committed to employing 2475 additional nurses and midwives in our first term, and 14 months into that term we have already surpassed that target," she said.

"This budget builds on the important work already done in increasing nurse numbers across NSW by allocating a further \$64 million to recruit approximately 500 additional nurses at public hospitals."

In other workforce spending, \$4.4 million will be allocated to employing more Clinical Nurse/Midwife Educators and Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialists, and a further \$1.9 million will go to supporting the Health Professionals Workforce Plan.

An extra \$42 million will provide more sub-acute services for general rehabilitation, palliative care and mental health under the third year of the COAG National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospital Services, Mrs Skinner said.

The NSW Government has committed to an impressive capital works program totalling \$4.7 billion over four years.

“This budget delivers on that promise with record spending on infrastructure that will see \$1.2 billion spent on expanding and renovating hospitals around the state,” Mrs Skinner said.

The NSW Government has committed \$25.6 million in planning funds for the Maitland (Lower Hunter) Hospital, Northern Beaches Hospital and for Health and Hospitals Fund projects including upgrading of Lismore and Kempsey Hospitals, the Yamba Health Centre, and the Hillston and Peak Hill Multi-Purpose Services.

New major capital works projects for the metropolitan area include:

- \$16 million to begin construction on Stage One of the \$270 million Blacktown Mount Druitt Hospital expansion
- \$3.5 million for Stage One of the \$120 million Hornsby Hospital redevelopment
- \$31.7 million to upgrade car park facilities at Blacktown, Nepean and Wollongong Hospitals

Rural and regional capital works projects include:

- \$1.5 million to upgrade Cessnock Hospital’s Emergency Department
- \$6.8 million for the \$170 million Bega Hospital
- \$17.7 million for the \$220 million Tamworth Stage Two Redevelopment

The budget also provides \$6.1 million in infrastructure funding for the Ambulance Service of NSW, including planning funds for new Ambulance stations at Albury, Bega and Wagga Wagga, ambulance radio network and new medical and IT equipment.

“The O’Farrell Government continues to give priority to frontline health services,” Mrs Skinner said.

“We are doing this by investing record amounts to provide quality and timely treatment for patients and by putting many millions of dollars into upgrading hospitals that have been let run down.”