

What the parties are promising



The Labor Party

By NSW Health Minister,
Carmel Tebbutt



As Health Minister, I regularly see first-hand how crucial nurses and midwives are to the health services we deliver.

The most immediate benefit we are providing to nurses and midwives will be delivered through the wages and conditions agreement we have just reached. Nurses and midwives told us that workloads were the most important issue and we have listened.

Not only will we deliver over 1,400 new nurses to our public health system to help ease nursing workloads, we are providing guaranteed levels of staffing across the majority of our in-patient wards as well as in many specialty areas. The agreement will deliver designated nurses for resuscitation areas in some

of our busiest Emergency Departments and recognise ACORN 2008 as part of the Award. When fully implemented, it represents an additional \$490 million annual investment in nurses and midwives alone and reflects our very real commitment to improving the wages and conditions of nurses and midwives.

An important part of this agreement is that it is secured as part of your State award. However, this would be at risk if a future government was to refer your award to the Federal system.

This Government remains steadfastly committed to retaining your State award and not giving it to the Federal IR system.

The pressures on the health system are many, and I know nurses and midwives in particular feel this impact most sharply. To meet this growing demand on health services we have increased the health budget by 192% since we came to office.

We have also committed New South Wales to the national health reform agreement through COAG. The extra funding Premier Kristina Keneally secured through the COAG arrangements is contributing 488 new hospital beds this year and will mean \$1.2 billion in funding for NSW over four years.

Importantly, the establishment of Local Health Networks and the Commonwealth's commitment to Medicare Locals will improve integration between acute care and primary care, easing the pressure on public hospitals.

This Government has proudly invested in the nursing and midwifery workforce since we were elected. We were the first government in the country to introduce Nurse Practitioners, and remain the State with the highest number. We have grown the nursing workforce by over 30% and have ensured it will continue to grow for the coming years. With this agreement we have increased wages by over 66%. A re-elected Labor Government will continue to work with nurses and midwives to deliver the best possible care for the patients of NSW.



The Greens



By NSW Greens MP and
Upper House candidate,
David Shoebridge

With Greens MPs in influential positions in the Federal Parliament and actively contesting the upcoming NSW election, there is an increased focus on what the Greens have to say on key issues like health and industrial relations.

The Greens are committed to a world-class public health system. We support abolishing the private health insurance rebate and redirecting those funds to the public health system, including public hospitals.

As nurses know only too well, the early discharge of seriously ill patients and long waiting lists are a direct result of chronic underfunding and staff shortages.

nurses this election

THE PARTIES EXPLAIN THEIR POLICIES ON HEALTH AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Improved funding for health care is essential. The Greens' platform also emphasises preventative health care, government funding for dental care, affordability and access, and training more health practitioners.

The Greens recognise the dire need to increase nurse-to-patient ratios and skill mix to ensure the best patient health outcomes, improve working conditions and help reduce high stress levels at work. We congratulate the Union and its members for the results of the NSWNA Safety in Numbers campaign. The Greens know there is more to do, especially for community nurses, and we will keep working with you on this campaign.

We oppose the introduction of case-mix funding proposed in the recent national health agreement and will keep a critical eye on its use in NSW hospitals. Patient care and funding must be based on community health needs, not a one-size-fits-all national formula.

On the broader industrial relations front the Greens believe government services and public works should be provided by well-paid and respected government employees, not private contractors. The public sector must lead the way for improved working conditions across the board. This includes increasing annual leave to five weeks a year and progressively increasing superannuation rates from 9% to 15%.

For the Greens, all employees should be able to access long service leave after 10 years in any industry or employment. We support a portable long service leave scheme based on the successful model in the NSW construction industry.

From industrial relations to health and beyond, the Greens have detailed policies on our website: www.nsw.greens.org.au/policies/nsw. We welcome NSWNA members to review them.



The Coalition



By Shadow Minister for Health Jillian Skinner

Having listened to and worked with nurses and midwives all over the State for more than 14 years, I know how important you are to the successful operation of our health system. Nurses are the backbone of the health system.

The NSW Liberals & Nationals are committed to a health system that cares for nurses, supports nurses and gives nurses a stronger say in patient and management decisions. As someone who is passionate about becoming Health Minister if we are successful at the March State Election, I want more nurses working in NSW hospitals.

After 16 years, the State Labor Government has failed the nursing profession. In the 2009/2010 year,

the Keneally Labor Government actually cut nurse numbers in NSW, according to their own documents. This included cutting 340 nurse positions from Western Sydney and nearly 100 positions from Northern Sydney and the Central Coast.

I am committed to delivering more nurses for NSW hospitals.

We have also signed up to a \$3 billion capital works program that will fix many of the hospital upgrades Labor has promised but never delivered.

I hear so many stories about bullying and intimidation; this culture has no place in a health system run by me. It is a sad fact that right now there are 1,316 nurse vacancies across the State. Many nurses have told me they would re-enter the public hospital system if they thought the culture had improved, and that should be our aim, to get those nurses back into the system and provide a workplace and career path in which nurses thrive.

I've also heard the voices of nurses, particularly those working in Hunter hospitals, who are angry that new rostering arrangements introduced by Labor mean those working on the wards no longer have a say about the shifts they work. They will always have a say in rostering decisions if a NSW Liberal and Nationals Government is elected.

We do not support Labor's policy of reducing the number of registered nurses. I believe experience is important and that we need the right skill mix.

I am happy that nurses have agreed to sign up to a new workplace agreement, and look forward to working with them if we are successful in March. There is plenty of good news still to come in this election campaign.

The choice at the State Election is clear: the NSW Liberals and Nationals who are for nurses; or the incompetent Keneally Labor Government that cuts nurse positions ensuring those remaining are rushed off their feet.