

# A MESSAGE FROM ST VINCENT'S PRIVATE NURSES AND MIDWIVES ABOUT THE PROTECTED INDUSTRIAL ACTION

January 2025

Dear Doctor,

St Vincent's Private Hospitals nurses and midwives are taking unprecedented industrial action as part of our campaign to achieve minimum staffing levels in our enterprise agreement.

Participating in this campaign has not been easy. We have been subjected to intense pressure to stop our action and management is docking our pay. We believe we are doing the right thing for our patients and to retain and recruit our nursing and midwifery workforce.

## WE WANT YOU TO KNOW SIX THINGS:

1. **All of our industrial action is legal** and is protected under the *Fair Work Act 2009*. This includes the closure of 1 in 3 beds (in non-exempt categories).
2. **This dispute is about safe staffing levels in theatres and wards.** We need safe minimum staffing standards and better workload mechanisms. We have been raising workload and patient safety concerns for a number of years. For example: the Fitzroy neurosurgical ward rosters two nurses to 9 patients on day shift and up to 1 nurse for 10 patients overnight. At St Vincent's Hospital in the public system the day shift ratio in the same clinical speciality is always 1:4 and 1:6 overnight. St Vincent's Private has one of the worst postnatal ratios in the state. On St Vincent's Private's postnatal ward overnight the ratio is 1:8, 1:9 and on occasion 1:10, while the public system must be 1:6.
3. **This dispute can only be resolved by talking.** St Vincent's Private Hospitals management has only met six times with our representative, the ANMF, in eight months.
4. **In 2023, St Vincent's Private Hospitals management agreed to implement nurse/midwife patient ratios in their NSW facilities:** St Vincent's Private Hospital in Sydney, Mater Hospital in North Sydney, and St Vincent's Private Hospital in Griffith.
5. **Victorian public sector hospitals have had mandated minimum nursing and midwifery ratios** in their enterprise agreement **since 2001** and in legislation since 2015.
6. **There is a significant shortage of nurses and midwives willing to work permanent full time or part time** in health facilities that don't prioritise safe staffing levels or their workforce. We are exhausted and worried about patient care. Many nurses and midwives are considering reducing their hours or resigning.

## WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT.

We know doctors are just as committed to ensuring patients receive high standards of care that are equal to or better than public hospitals. This cannot be guaranteed under St Vincent's Private Hospitals' current staffing levels and systems.

## PLEASE SHOW YOUR SUPPORT BY:

1. Raising these issues with hospital executives, seeking a rapid resolution to these negotiations that supports the staffing claims of your nursing and midwifery colleagues.
2. Speaking with your patients about the difference in St Vincent's Private staffing compared with the public sector and suggest they consider writing to the hospital or contacting the media.
3. Letting the nurses and midwives you work with know that you support them by wearing a sticker and signing our pledge.

Thank you for your support, so we can resolve this dispute and continue to provide the best possible care for our patients.

**St Vincent's Private nurses and midwives**

