



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Short-staffing woes hurting at South East Regional Hospital

Members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) are calling on Southern NSW Local Health District to urgently address nursing staff shortages at Bega's South East Regional Hospital, ahead of the busy summer holiday season.

South East Regional Hospital Branch of the NSWNMA wrote to hospital management and expressed their concern over the rising levels of overtime and growing fatigue among nurses and midwives, exacerbated by ongoing job vacancies not being filled.

South East Regional Hospital Branch Assistant Secretary, Diane Lang, said many issues still remained despite a comprehensive review of the hospital back in May.

"Our hospital services a very large geographical area, not just the population of Bega, and demand on our facility grows enormously over the summer holiday period," said Ms Lang.

"We've highlighted concerns about the regular opening of unfunded beds in our medical and surgical wards, where we are funded for 24 beds but often surge to 28 beds and we don't have enough nursing staff to cover them.

"Nursing and midwifery staff are constantly being asked to work overtime and extra shifts to cover the shortfalls, as well as unexpected vacancies such as sick leave.

"We're being told management is pursuing 'business cases' with Southern NSW LHD to fill gaps in the clinical staffing rosters, but the recruitment process simply isn't keeping pace. The Branch is aware the recruitment backlog goes back as far as June – this can't go on."

South East Regional Hospital Branch Delegate, Alan Birchall, said the Branch recently met with Bega MP, Andrew Constance, and outlined the pressure nursing and midwifery staff were under.

"Mr Constance listened to all of our concerns and has agreed to raise them directly with the Minister for Health, Brad Hazzard," Mr Birchall said.

"We really need for these vacancies to be filled so that nurses and midwives aren't turning up for work stressed that they'll be required to stay back again and again.

"The Bega Valley population jumps to 90,000 people over the school holiday period and we desperately want to make sure all of our patients are receiving the safest care possible – adequate staffing ensures this."

The NSWNMA is calling on all Local Health Districts to be more proactive and innovative in their recruitment strategies to address the issue as a matter of urgency.

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