



# NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## Budget woes prompt bed closures at Blacktown

A total of eight beds will shutdown at Blacktown Hospital, following concerns raised by NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) members about serious nursing staff shortages at the site.

The Director of Nursing (DoN) and representatives from Western Sydney Local Health District (LHD) management took the decision to reduce services and close the beds as soon as practicable, in response to mounting pressure from NSWNMA branch members.

During a meeting earlier this week, more than 40 NSWNMA branch members unanimously passed a resolution to take action to ensure nursing staff met their professional obligations, if management failed to address staffing issues and implement changes.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said members held significant concerns and feared patient safety would be put at risk due to nursing staff shortages across several of the hospital's wards.

"Nursing staff indicated the safety of patients would be compromised unless management implemented changes and appropriate nursing staff levels to adequately cover workloads, including covering leave relief," Mr Holmes said.

"Our members confirmed all wards at the hospital had been operating short-staffed and that management had been using nursing support staff, such as clinical nurse educators, clinical nurse consultants and nursing unit managers, to provide patient care.

"It's unacceptable for management to put nursing staff in this position, let alone prolong the situation by citing widespread budget constraints across the LHD."

Following subsequent meetings between NSWNMA branch officials, the DoN and LHD management, four beds in the Medical Assessment Unit and four beds in Surgical Unit 2 will close.

The NSWNMA branch officials have also been assured that the DoN has undertaken to replace leave, in particular sick leave, as per the Award and also to stop utilising nursing support staff to cover the shortfalls.

"Our members will continue to monitor the situation and confirm whether these measures are adequate to deal with the staffing issues," Mr Holmes said.

"As always, emergency cases will be prioritised and our members will continue to ensure safe patient care – as agreed with the NSW Ministry of Health and state government.

"This week the NSW Health Minister made a commitment to put patients first – I would urge her to act on that promise and turn her attention to patients in Western Sydney."

Further meetings between NSWNMA branch officials, the DoN and LHD management are scheduled to occur on Friday and again Monday, 19 May.



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