



21 August, 2014

## Talks continue over workloads at Shoalhaven

Members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) are engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Local Health District (LHD) to implement a long-term solution and resolve nursing staff shortages at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital.

Two beds remain closed in Medical ward A, after a staffing shortfall was identified during night shift on Monday. LHD management agreed not to utilise the beds until additional nursing staff were rostered accordingly.

Members of the Shoalhaven District Hospital branch are continuing to monitor the staffing situation in Medical ward A on a shift by shift basis. The branch members maintain, as per normal practice, any emergency case that presents to the ward will be prioritised and provided high-level patient care.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said it was paramount a long-term plan was designed and implemented in Medical ward A, which allowed nursing staff to deliver the appropriate safe care patients deserve.

"We look forward to LHD management fulfilling the necessary requirements to ensure the ward is staffed as per the Public Health System (state) Award," Mr Holmes said.

"There is a clear need for LHD management to recruit additional permanent staff, given the current permanent and casual staff are being pushed to their limits in order to fill the vacant nursing hours.

"We will continue to support our branch members in their efforts to achieve the right balance at Shoalhaven District Memorial, rather than any short-term quick fixes that could impact upon safe patient care."

Mr Holmes noted with interest responses provided by the NSW Health Minister, Jillian Skinner, and Deputy Secretary of NSW Health, Karen Crawshaw, during a Budget Estimates hearing at NSW Parliament on Monday.

When asked specifically if the Ministry of Health was aware of the nursing staff shortages and what actions would be taken, the Deputy Secretary indicated Medical ward A would be rearranged:

***The Hon. PAUL GREEN:** This morning as I was driving up I heard on the radio that Shoalhaven hospital is having an issue with nursing staff. Minister, I think it was the Nurses and Midwives Association saying that for 14 weeks they have not really been listened to and then over the week there seemed to be a covering of shortages of beds. Do you have a comment on what is happening down there and why they may have been short staffed for 14 weeks up until the weekend?*

***Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** Yes, I was made aware of it this morning through the media that you heard and in fact there has been a press release put out by the union about the beds. Again, I think it is ward A.*



*The Hon. PAUL GREEN: Medical ward, I believe.*

*Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Medical ward A. I am advised that this matter is now being rectified, but I might ask Karen Crawshaw to elaborate with further details.*

*Ms CRAWSHAW: I have recently been down to visit the Shoalhaven and recently went to medical ward A. I think there are issues there. I have raised the issues with the chief executive of the district and both she and I are in agreement that medical ward A is a very large ward at the moment; it is close to 40 beds. It needs to be split into two and properly staffed as two separate wards with the infrastructure that goes with that. I have confirmed with the chief executive this morning that that solution is in train.*

(Transcript 18/08/2014 Health, Medical Research Budget Estimates)

Last Thursday, branch members informed LHD management they had passed a unanimous resolution to take action themselves and begin closing beds, to ensure nursing staff levels matched the number of patients required to meet their professional obligations for safe patient care.

Staffing spot checks conducted by branch members over a 14 week period revealed, on average, Medical ward A in Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital had fallen under the required 5.5 Nursing-Hours-Per-Patient-Day by 70 hours per week.

Medical ward A regularly has 37 patients, including four monitored cardiac patients, however the ward is currently only funded and staffed for 33 patients.

Members of the Shoalhaven District Hospital branch will continue their discussions with LHD management as part of efforts to deliver a long-term solution.

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