



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

# MEDIA RELEASE

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20 March, 2015

## Nurses and midwives put community on notice over staffing issues at Tamworth

Members of Tamworth Base Hospital Branch of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) have held a lunchtime rally outside the local hospital, to raise community awareness over chronic staffing issues at the site.

The branch members felt compelled to highlight the issue publicly, after months of inaction by Hunter New England Local Health District (HNE LHD) management to address the unsafe staffing levels across a large number of wards at Tamworth Base Hospital.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said the issue had reached a critical point and members held heightened concerns due to an ongoing shortfall in mandated nursing staff hours.

"Our members have a professional obligation to ensure the delivery of safe patient care, using the guaranteed nursing hours allocated by HNE LHD management," Mr Holmes said.

"Despite this, branch members have confirmed chronic staffing shortages in the maternity unit, mental health unit, medical and surgical wards, orthopaedic ward and rehabilitation ward.

"Concerns have been raised with HNE LHD management repeatedly, yet they continue to ignore the specified nursing hours per patient day legal requirements which are stipulated in the Public Health System state Award.

"This puts patients, nurses and midwives at risk. Our members cannot and will not continue to ignore these risks."

Mr Holmes said it was unacceptable for HNE LHD management to force nursing and midwifery staff into such untenable positions and to ignore representations by the Branch who have sought workloads to be adequately covered.

Staffing spot checks over several months revealed many of the wards at Tamworth Base Hospital had fallen under the required nursing hours per patient day on a regular basis. In accordance with the Public Health System (state) Award clause 53 (s) 5: *'action must immediately commence to rectify the shortfall'*. HNE LHD management has confirmed it will assess the issues raised.

In addition, NSWNMA members at Gunnedah held a lunchtime rally yesterday to publicly highlight their concerns over unsafe staffing levels at Gunnedah District Health Service.

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