



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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Nurses and midwives highlight staffing issues at Armidale

Up to 40 members of Armidale Community Health and Hospital Branch of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) and their supporters gathered outside the local hospital yesterday to raise awareness of ongoing nurse staffing issues.

The branch members took a decision to highlight the issues publicly, following inadequate action by management to address the routine understaffing of several wards and units within Armidale Rural Referral Hospital.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said branch members had raised their concerns repeatedly with management, particularly shortfalls in mandated nursing staff hours for the medical and surgical wards, but were disappointed by management's lack of urgency to rectify the issues.

"A review of spot check data for the medical and surgical wards indicates they are regularly staffed under the minimum safe staffing levels," Mr Holmes said.

"The nurses and midwives we represent have a professional obligation to ensure the delivery of safe patient care, under the nursing hours which are allocated by Hunter New England Local Health District (HNE LHD) and they are required to speak up if problems with staffing arise.

"These nurse staffing shortages have not been confined to the medical and surgical wards but also in the emergency department and maternity unit.

"It is not acceptable for HNE LHD to put patients, nurses or midwives at risk like this by continually breaching the specified nursing hours per patient day legal requirements."

Over several months, staffing spot checks revealed the medical and surgical wards at Armidale Rural Referral Hospital fell under the required nursing hours per patient day. In accordance with the Public Health System (state) Award clause 53 (s) 5: *'action must immediately commence to rectify the shortfall'*.

At a recent extraordinary branch meeting, the Armidale Community Health and Hospital Branch passed a resolution which called on management to immediately rectify the workload issues. Management has since confirmed to the branch it is attempting to recruit more nurses. The NSWNMA has also approached HNE LHD directly to address the issues raised.

The action today by Armidale Community Health and Hospital Branch followed similar activities by Tamworth Base Hospital Branch and NSWNMA members at Gunnedah late last week.

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