



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

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## Bed closures possible at Lismore Base Hospital

Lismore Base Hospital Branch of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has warned the local community it could be forced to turn away patients, as a result of major concerns over nursing staff shortages within the Women's Care Unit at Lismore Base Hospital.

During a meeting mid-week, NSWNMA branch members unanimously passed a resolution to take action and will refuse to accept non-maternity admissions into the Women's Care Unit from next Monday, unless hospital management immediately restores staffing to adequate levels.

Manager of Member Organising at the NSWNMA, Lisa Kremmer, said midwifery and nursing staff in the unit fear their professional obligations towards safe patient care are being compromised as a result of management's decision to cut staffing.

"For more than six months our members have repeatedly raised concerns with hospital management, after the Ministry of Health conducted a review of maternity staffing levels and Northern NSW Local Health District management subsequently reduced the number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff allocated to the Women's Care Unit," Ms Kremmer said.

"Midwives and nursing staff in the unit are deeply concerned that management proceeded with its cuts to staffing, removing 182 nursing and midwifery hours per week, placing many patients and staff at risk.

"Currently, the unit provides key maternity services for mothers and babies and also takes admissions following gynaecological surgery, overflow for pre and post natal care, as well as surgical overflow from the main hospital wards.

"This is having a significant impact on the level of care they can provide, particularly during night shift when staff with limited experience can be left caring for up to 23 patients and 10 babies, without access to additional staff.

"As a result, the branch members feel they have no choice but to reduce the number of surgical admissions to the Women's Care Unit, this will allow the reduced number of staff to focus primarily on the care of mothers and babies."

Ms Kremmer said the step was a last resort and one that the branch members did not take lightly. She confirmed emergency care and treatment would not be affected by the action and all maternity related admissions and presentations would continue as normal.

Hospital management was advised of the planned industrial action and has been given a deadline of 5pm Monday, 18 May, to restore staffing levels that will allow safe patient care.

Members of the Lismore Base Hospital branch are due to discuss the issue with LHD management Friday morning.

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