



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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21 August, 2015

Hunter New England ignores patient safety concerns at Tamworth

Tamworth Hospital Branch of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) maintains there are serious patient safety concerns at Tamworth Rural Referral Hospital, following a full day in the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW (IRC) yesterday to discuss workload issues.

Representatives of the NSWNMA and Hunter New England Local Health District (HNE LHD) returned to the IRC for further conciliation, after two disputes were filed in July regarding staffing in the hospital's emergency department and maternity services.

Yesterday, the IRC recommended HNE LHD management provide an additional 10 nursing hours on night shift in the emergency department on a trial basis for two months from next Monday.

As of 3pm today, HNE LHD management had not informed the NSWNMA if it would accept the IRC's recommendation and prepare an amended roster to accommodate the additional nursing hours.

Assistant General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Judith Kiejda, said it was abhorrent that HNE LHD management had failed to recognise the importance of the Commission's recommendation to uphold safe patient care and safe staffing within the new emergency department.

"A thorough assessment of workloads in the emergency department indicates additional nursing staff are needed, particularly on the night shift," Ms Kiejda said.

"The Industrial Relations Commission undertook an inspection of the new facilities at Tamworth Hospital and made a recommendation yesterday following hours of conciliation in relation to the emergency department.

"We will be discussing the outcome with our members at an extraordinary Branch meeting next week."

Issues relating to safe staffing and isolation within the hospital's new maternity services were also canvassed before the IRC yesterday, but were unable to be resolved.

During last month's hearing, HNE LHD management acknowledged a staffing shortfall and agreed to release 4.82 full-time equivalent midwifery positions from the special care nursery back into the maternity unit.

To the disappointment of Tamworth Hospital Branch members, HNE LHD representatives yesterday refused to provide any new interim measures to help address the ongoing issues throughout the hospital's maternity services.

The NSWNMA has a further 21 days to consider its options and discuss the matter with members working in maternity.



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