



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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Nurses and midwives on verge of breaking point in Tamworth

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), together with members of the Tamworth Hospital Branch, today strongly condemned Hunter New England Local Health District (HNE LHD) for failing to uphold safe patient care and workplace safety at the hospital.

During an extraordinary meeting of the Branch this afternoon, members expressed their overwhelming disappointment with HNE LHD management and highlighted a range of serious understaffing incidents which have been exacerbated since the transfer to new facilities last month.

Assistant General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Judith Kiejda, attended the Branch meeting and said members were appalled by HNE LHD management's contempt for the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW (IRC) process and the broader community.

"Regardless of where they work in this hospital, our members put their professional obligations to their patients first at all times and it is unacceptable that HNE LHD management refuses to do the same," Ms Kiejda said.

"Our members have consistently argued that these are pre-existing problems exacerbated by the new building.

"The emergency department and maternity services have had ongoing workload issues and our members will take all necessary actions to uphold their professional responsibilities to patients and the people of Tamworth."

Secretary of the Tamworth Hospital Branch, Jill Telfer, confirmed more than 50 Branch members passed a resolution at the meeting to call on HNE LHD to implement the recommendations proposed by the IRC last week.

"The nurses and midwives are asking management in good faith to do what is right for this health service and for all our patients," Ms Telfer said.

"We support the IRC's recommendation for an additional 10 nursing hours on the night shift in the emergency department, as well as its proposal to implement interim additional staffing in the maternity unit while a reasonable workloads process can be followed.

"We're now extremely worried that it's only a matter of time before patient outcomes could be affected either in the maternity or emergency departments and that there could be a critical incident because of the current lack of cooperation by management," Ms Telfer said.

"We're also turning to the community in this desperately disappointing situation and calling for their support – we're all working around the clock to provide the best possible professional nursing and midwifery care to our local community, a robust community which we also call home."



Branch members took the opportunity to describe a number of critical incidents at Tamworth Rural Referral Hospital in recent weeks, including only one midwife being rostered in the birthing unit during night shift despite multiple presentations, labours and emergency deliveries.

Emergency department staff also outlined regular occurrences of workload issues intensifying throughout the duration of the night shift, with nursing staff working prolonged periods without breaks and working extended overtime to manage growing patient caseloads.

The Branch has given HNE LHD management a deadline of 4pm Friday (28 August) to confirm implementation of the IRC's recommendations for both the emergency department and maternity services and will continue to consider future options.

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