



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tamworth Hospital staffing disputes conclude in IRC

Two long running staffing disputes impacting the maternity unit and emergency department at Tamworth Rural Referral Hospital concluded in Industrial Relations Commission of NSW (IRC) today.

Hunter New England Local Health District (HNE LHD) sought to withdraw both its disputes against the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), after outlining to the IRC a number of short-term solutions it developed during a meeting in Tamworth late Wednesday (7 October).

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said whilst members of the Tamworth Hospital Branch were disappointed no longer term solutions were imminent, they were relieved that the short-term fixes would at least provide extra support in the interim.

"We have had some progress in that Hunter New England Health has confirmed that there will be an additional 10 hours rostered to the maternity unit during the night shift seven days a week," Mr Holmes said.

"That has been an important part of raising concerns around staffing issues in the maternity unit and at least local management has acknowledged that problems do exist and patient safety was being put at risk.

"We remain concerned that to fill the additional 10 hours during night shift in the maternity unit, local management has decided to reallocate a vacant community midwifery position.

"We are also aware local management has ceased rostering enrolled nurses during the night shift in the maternity unit, which is an important step towards improving skill mix issues overnight."

HNE LHD management also confirmed to the IRC that it would roster nurses for the Triage, Resuscitation and Team Leader (in-charge) roles separately within the emergency department, and in addition would draw on nursing staff resources from the Emergency Short Stay Unit (ESSU) to support the emergency department over the next three months.

Mr Holmes said this proposal was likely to deliver problems in the longer term when the ESSU becomes fully operational, but agreed it would assist with the immediate short staffing crisis in the emergency department.

"We will certainly continue to monitor what is occurring in both the maternity unit and the emergency department as time goes on," Mr Holmes said.

"We want to ensure that our members can deliver safe patient care, whether it is in the emergency department, maternity unit or across the rest of this major rural referral hospital.

"What is important is that all levels of management within HNE LHD listen to their clinical staff about the issues they are raising, particularly when they call for assistance to deliver safe patient care.



“It is the responsibility of HNE local management, district management and the HNE Board to listen to all valid concerns raised by nursing and midwifery staff.”

The NSWNMA vowed to continue to campaign for safe patient care right across Tamworth hospital and indicated its members were determined to deliver the best care possible but would continue to seek the appropriate support from local management to do so.

The NSWNMA said it would also continue to support the nursing and midwifery staff as reviews are conducted across both the emergency department and maternity unit in the coming months.

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