



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

General Secretary: Brett Holmes | Assistant General Secretary: Judith Kiejda
P (02) 8595 1234 | www.facebook.com/nswnma | twitter.com/nswnma

20 November, 2015

Nurses shattered by loss of job security prior to Christmas

Stressed, upset and anxious about their future, Northern Rivers nursing and midwifery staff have called on Northern NSW Local Health District (NNSW LHD) management to urgently overhaul a workforce plan proposed for the new Byron Central Hospital.

Both the Byron and Mullumbimby District Hospital Branches of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) held extraordinary Branch meetings this week, with resolutions passed to seek immediate improvements to the workforce plan and consultation process.

Assistant General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Judith Kiejda, said the long-awaited plan, released last Friday afternoon (13 November), was a blow to local nurses and midwives and had left them with little job security.

"Our members have been waiting for this workforce plan to be released since August. Now, six weeks out from Christmas and the busy holiday season, they've been told they'll need to follow a process of applying for their current positions," Ms Kiejda said.

"The LHD has told them there are not enough jobs at the new hospital for all current staff, with eight full-time equivalent nursing jobs abolished.

"The opening date for Byron Central Hospital has also been brought forward March next year, shifting the planned closure of both Byron District and Mullumbimby District hospitals.

"Understandably, our members are upset by the little consultation that has occurred to date. There have also been attempts to exclude union representation from future consultation meetings, which is completely unacceptable given the state of uncertainty staff are in."

Secretary of Mullumbimby District Hospital Branch, Shauna Boyle, said the nursing staff were anxious and felt they did not have enough information about the process to apply for their jobs.

"Our members are shocked by the removal of their job security, especially those who have worked in the region for many years. This has been a huge blow and the timing just before Christmas has left them gob-smacked," Ms Boyle said.

"We are very concerned about the proposed combination of key senior roles, such as a Nursing Unit Manager and Clinical Nurse Educator. These are two very distinct leadership roles – to combine them is nonsensical and raises conflict of interest issues."

Byron District Hospital Branch Secretary, Liz McCall, said her members shared the same sentiments during their extraordinary meeting on Thursday, including the possibility that the LHD may handpick certain positions.

"There's a perception the new management positions have been devised in an inequitable way to favour certain staff skill sets, raising concerns that preferential treatment will occur if these positions are not advertised and chosen on merit," said Ms McCall.



“The proposed amalgamation of senior roles is near-sighted and not supported, particularly in light of the dedicated enhancement funding that created Clinical Nurse Educator positions in the first place.

“We’re worried the combination of certain roles could also remove future career pathways for staff.

“It’s imperative for nursing staff to be appropriately skilled to ensure patient safety continues at all times – that is what our community expects in a public health system and rightfully deserves.”

Ms Kiejda added it was unacceptable for the LHD to suggest that senior registered nurses (eighth year and thereafter) would require less clinical education than other nursing grades in a larger, brand new hospital.

“This contravenes the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency requirement for continuing professional development, it is an erroneous claim, not to mention poses serious risks to the continued delivery safe patient care,” Ms Kiejda said.

The 2008 Garling Report into Acute Care Services in NSW Public Hospitals also states: *“The safety and quality of care provided to patients in public hospitals depends upon the skill of the whole hospital workforce which in turn depends upon how well they were trained before coming to the hospital, and how well they continue to be trained within the hospital after they join the staff.”*

The NSWNMA has urgently sought additional information from the LHD as part of the workforce plan consultation and will continue to assist the Mullumbimby and Byron District Branches to lobby for improved transparency throughout the process.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Judith Kiejda, Assistant General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 674 119

Gia Hayne, Media Advisor, NSWNMA 0488 015 317