



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

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

21 January, 2016

Hospital violence horror stories dominate talks

More than 140 delegates of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) this week shared their growing fears about incidents of violence and aggression occurring in public hospitals and other health care settings across the state.

Four resolutions moved by the NSWNMA's Nepean Hospital Penrith Branch were passed unanimously during a Committee of Delegates meeting on Tuesday evening. All four resolutions sought urgent interventions by the NSW Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner.

Acting General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Judith Kiejda, said the rising issue of violence in the workplace dominated the meeting and a large number of violent examples were discussed by delegates.

"The more we look into the issue of violence, the more horror stories and evidence comes to light of just how bad the situation is in our public hospital system," Ms Kiejda said.

"This isn't just a problem occurring randomly in our major metropolitan emergency departments – it's happening throughout various wards in regional and rural hospital settings as well and it desperately needs addressing.

"Understandably, delegates from our Nepean Hospital Branch have been heavily impacted by the shooting incident which occurred in their emergency department last week and on behalf of the broader nursing profession feel compelled to call on the Health Minister to act and act urgently.

"Delegates from Lockhart in the state's south, Shoalhaven, RPA, Nepean, Scone, Coffs Harbour, Byron Bay and Tweed Heads in the north also described horrific incidents of violence that have occurred over recent months.

"From the husband of a labouring woman who repeatedly threatened nursing staff and then theatre staff during an emergency caesarean, a methylamphetamine (ice) affected patient who removed a hospital ward door from its hinges and physically threatened staff, to a violent patient left in the care of emergency department staff who broke a window with his head, prompting a riot police response.

"It's imperative that the Minister for Health addresses this escalating violence as a priority, with both short and long-term solutions and hasn't simply used today's meeting with the Health Services Union as a token gesture to appease hospital security personnel.

"The NSWNMA, along with many other health stakeholders, are prepared to meet with the Ministry of Health and work through the issues collaboratively," said Ms Kiejda.

The NSWNMA confirmed it would continue highlight the concerns raised by nursing and midwifery delegates with the Minister for Health as a matter of urgency.

The four unanimous resolutions passed were as follows:

9.1 Nepean Hospital Penrith Branch



This Committee of Delegates calls on the Minister for Health Jillian Skinner to seek an urgent meeting with the NSW Minister for Police Troy Grant in order to address how NSW police officers manage individuals in Emergency Departments who have been arrested/awaiting bail or scheduled under the NSW Mental Health Act, and who are considered dangerous.

Once legal paperwork has been 'Served' on the person in question, police officers should not then leave the patient in the Emergency Department nor should they be admitted to any other part of the hospital unless they are under the supervision of an appropriately trained security officer.

9.2 Nepean Hospital Penrith Branch

This Committee of Delegates believes that the practice of police leaving aggressive and violent patients in Emergency Departments be reviewed to ensure that once an assessment is conducted and police assistance is required, then a formal request be made that the police continue to remain on duty and guard the individual in question. The safety of staff, patients and members of the public is paramount.

9.3 Nepean Hospital Penrith Branch

This Committee of Delegates calls on the Minister for Health Jillian Skinner to reinstate the Special Constable status for security staff in health facilities across NSW – so that security staff have adequate powers and the necessary protection to appropriately detain violent and aggressive people. Further to this, the Minister also has a duty of care to ensure that there is adequate security staff for all areas of our public hospitals.

9.4 Nepean Hospital Penrith Branch

This Committee of Delegates calls on NSW Health to ensure all staff in Emergency Departments are trained as a matter of urgency in self defense techniques, de-escalation processes and that all Emergency Departments have an urgent review of duress alarms and responses.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Judith Kiejda, Acting General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 674 119

Gia Hayne, Media Advisor, NSWNMA 0488 015 317