



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

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## Dubbo hospital breaching minimum safe staffing

Unsafe staffing resulting in excessive overtime at the new Dubbo Base Hospital has driven NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) members to hold a stop work meeting today to consider taking industrial action.

There are currently 27 full time vacancies that need to be filled in order to meet minimum requirements and staff are averaging 423 hours of overtime per week across the hospital.

Management has refused to agree with the NSWNMA Dubbo Base Hospital branch's requests to close beds to meet the agreed Award-based safe staffing levels and decrease non urgent elective surgery by 20 per cent in order to reduce bed demand. Clinical Nurse educators have also been taken away from their important educator role to backfill some of the recent vacancies.

Assistant General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Judith Kiejda, said the average overtime worked per week was astounding and unsustainable.

"To try and run a hospital 27 staff short is just not possible. The exhaustion caused by working such unacceptable hours of overtime is creating high levels of fatigue and leading to increased sick leave, which makes the whole situation much worse," Ms Kiejda said.

"We're seeing staff in the operating suites putting in 120 hours of overtime a week. Those kinds of conditions are clearly unsafe and put the Dubbo community and hospital staff at risk.

"The Dubbo nurses have been carrying this load for many years but things have got excessively worse at the new hospital. The NSWNMA warned the Western NSW Local Health District that the staffing arrangements were unsustainable before the new hospital opened mid-December last year. Now, here we are at the start of the busiest time of the year, when staff levels should be increasing, with vacancies at untenable highs and no winter bed strategy signed off.

"It's a case we've seen many times before when new hospitals are built with a much larger footprint, yet management fail to recruit appropriately because they don't have the funding. We need the federal government to take responsibility start providing the funding our public hospitals need, instead of cutting it by \$57 billion and pushing management and staff to their absolute limits."

The NSWNMA Dubbo Base Hospital branch will hold a stop work meeting today at 2:30pm to consider taking industrial action in the interests of safe patient care.

The NSWNMA will continue negotiations with local management until staffing requirements are met and members of the NSWNMA Dubbo Base Hospital branch feel it is safe to operate services efficiently.

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