



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

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6 July, 2016

Coffs Harbour mental health nurses rally to protest staffing shortages

Unsafe staffing conditions at Coffs Harbour Mental Health Inpatient Unit have driven NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) members to hold a lunchtime rally TODAY and close three low dependency beds until staffing shortages are rectified.

Private security officers and Assistants in Nursing (AiNs) are being used to replace qualified nursing staff at the facility as excessive overtime reaches unsustainable levels.

During the two week period from 30 May to 12 June, 140 hours of overtime were recorded.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said the facility has been struggling with chronic nurse staffing shortages for a long time.

"This is an ongoing issue that has hit its boiling point. The serious staffing issues need to be addressed to ensure the delivery of safe patient care," Mr Holmes said.

"There are clearly problems when overtime reaches these levels, unqualified and unregulated staff are being used to fill holes in the roster and employees on extended leave are regularly being scheduled to work as if available.

"We've attempted to resolve the matter with management but have not come to an agreement, so our members have decided to hold the lunchtime rally; close three of the 24 Low Dependency Unit (LDU) beds until an agreed establishment of nursing staff is recruited and maintained; and disallow security guards, Health and Security Assistants and Assistants in Nursing to fill the gaps of highly trained and skilled mental health nurses."

The NSWNMA Coffs Harbour Mental Health branch will hold a lunchtime rally meeting today at 1pm out the front of Coffs Harbour Health Campus for a period of 30 minutes to highlight concerns to the local community.

The NSWNMA will continue negotiations with local management until staffing requirements are met and members of the NSWNMA Coffs Harbour Mental Health branch feel it is safe to operate services.

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