



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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21 March, 2017

Staffing must be addressed in South East Regional Hospital review

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) is cautiously optimistic a review into South East Regional Hospital will resolve ongoing workload issues and staffing shortages plaguing the Bega facility.

Since the new hospital opened last March, NSWNMA members have repeatedly called on Southern NSW Local Health District to address their concerns which have been compounded by an increase in demand for health services.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said it was unacceptable for local hospital management to provide only minimum staffing and ignore the clinical needs of the community.

"Our members are exhausted and struggling to deliver their professional commitment to provide safe patient care at all times," Mr Holmes said.

"We are aware of up to 30 occasions when three operating theatres have opened for procedures, despite South East Regional Hospital only having a budget to fully staff two operating theatres and a procedure room – this puts enormous pressure on exiting nursing staff in these areas.

"Local management has a duty of care to both staff and patients in their hospital. It's their responsibility to manage budgets to supply the necessary staffing for the entire financial year.

"Local management claims it provides minimum staffing as per the *Public Health System Nurses' & Midwives' (State) Award*, ignoring the fact that staffing should increase to reflect any increased acuity of patients.

"There have also been shortages in administrative staff at South East Regional which have flow on impacts to the reasonable workloads of nurses and midwives.

"South East Regional Hospital isn't the first new public hospital to experience staffing problems, Wagga Wagga Rural Referral Hospital also suffered a similar fate. It's clear the Ministry of Health needs to take another look at how funding is allocated for staffing in these new, larger facilities."

Last Friday the NSW Minister for Health announced an independent review into the operation and management of South East Regional Hospital, which is due for completion by the end of April.

The NSWNMA will continue to lobby hospital management on behalf of its members to address local staffing issues at a matter of urgency.

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