



19 October, 2017

## Industrial ban rolled out at John Hunter Hospital

Nurses and midwives are pushing ahead with an industrial ban on follow-up phone calls to patients discharged from John Hunter Hospital, following an extraordinary meeting to discuss ongoing safe staffing concerns.

This afternoon, almost 100 members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) John Hunter Hospital Branch voted unanimously to continue deferring the follow-up phone calls to other clinical and health allied staff.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said Branch members confirmed the bans would continue until Hunter New England Local Health District implemented safe nursing staff numbers, as per the *Public Health System Nurses and Midwives (state) Award*, and filled the outstanding vacant positions.

"It's all well and good that Hunter New England LHD says they've 'appointed' 52 new nursing positions in the past three weeks, but that does not indicate how many have actually started and are being rostered to work throughout the facility," Mr Holmes said.

"There are also inconsistencies in the breakdown of these so-called 'appointed' positions, given that permanent full-time equivalent vacancies have been allocated to midwifery graduates who are on an eligibility list and won't commence until February.

"Meanwhile, members tell us that 8-hour shifts are still being backfilled with either 6 or 6.5 hour casual or agency nursing staff, leaving a 1.5 to 2 hour shortfall in the nursing hours required per patient.

"The 6.0 nursing hours per patient day required under the state Award at John Hunter Hospital is only a *minimum* nursing staff requirement, Hunter New England LHD does have capacity to increase it, but instead they choose not to.

"We all recognise these follow-up phone calls for discharged patients are important, but in the current work environment, nurses and midwives should not be directed away from the care they are obligated to provide to inpatients currently in their wards and units."

The Branch members expressed further disappointment regarding a lack of support from Hunter New England LHD after it was revealed a revenue stream is associated with the follow-up phone calls to discharged patients.

"Despite the Chief Executive explicitly indicating to me three weeks ago that no revenue was connected to these calls, the Branch has since uncovered the National Weighted Activity Unit associated with follow-up phone calls is 0.0511 – which equates to \$239.70 per phone call," said Mr Holmes.

"Our members are right to be upset by this revelation and Michael DiRienzo has some explaining to do to the people of the Hunter."

An industrial ban to defer the follow-up phone calls to discharged patients came into effect at 10am today.



Late this afternoon the NSWNMA was notified that Hunter New England LHD had filed a dispute in the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW.

---

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Brett Holmes, General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 550 324

Gia Hayne, Media Advisor, NSWNMA 0488 015 317