



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

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Staffing issues at Blacktown Hospital escalate

The nurse staffing shortfall at Blacktown Hospital has reached dangerous levels, with staff working almost 1500 hours of overtime in the past three weeks across 16 wards, including surgical, maternity, respiratory and cardiac.

Nurses and midwives from the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) Blacktown Hospital Branch met to discuss serious concerns around their ability to provide safe patient care and passed a resolution to no longer participate in hospital audits, domestic cleaning duties, or assisting with pushing patient beds until vacant positions are all fully backfilled.

In addition, those working overtime will wear a red armband to highlight the ongoing staffing issue. The actions will commence at 9am today.

General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said the decision was made to ease strain on exhausted nurses and midwives.

"There are currently 39 full-time/part-time vacancies that we know of in these 16 wards alone, causing extensive overtime and resulting in a poor nursing skill mix, increased bed numbers above the rostered and funded profile, inadequate support staff and missed meal breaks," Mr Holmes said.

"Despite countless discussions with management, there is still a lack in backfilling of temporary vacancies and an over reliance on lower classified staff to cover the shortfall.

"The issue has been going on for too long and our members cannot wait any longer. It's an unacceptably slow recruitment process. We need more short term solutions implemented to ensure patient safety is not compromised."

Mr Holmes added that members were conscious of the next period of very high demand so it was important to get the staffing levels right for the busy Christmas period given it can take three months to recruit.

"Blacktown Hospital experienced a 14 per cent drop in on-time treatment in its emergency department in the latest Bureau of Health Information's quarterly report, with 53.8 per cent of patients not starting their treatment on time. We know Christmas is a busy time, particularly for the ED, and opening unfunded beds without the staff to manage them is not an acceptable solution to the problem," said Mr Holmes.

"Members are making an important decision to prioritise safe patient care until we fill those vacancies."

The Blacktown Hospital Branch is asking the community for support.

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