



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

General Secretary: Brett Holmes | Assistant General Secretary: Judith Kiejda
P (02) 8595 1234 | www.facebook.com/nswnma | twitter.com/nswnma

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Nurses express shock over bed cuts at St Vincent's

Around one hundred nursing staff gathered outside Sydney's iconic St Vincent's Hospital this afternoon and expressed their dismay over the widespread closure of beds and services at the Darlinghurst facility.

From today, more than 160 beds across 10 wards and units have been shutdown for at least the next six weeks at St Vincent's Hospital, prompting concern and confusion amongst the affected staff.

General Secretary of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), Brett Holmes, told a crowd of devastated nursing staff that hospital management had initiated the restructure arrangements in secret and had played down the flow-on implications to the public.

"Slashing this hospital's entire bed-base by more than half is a serious restructure – temporary or not – and it warrants a thorough consultation process for both staff and the community," Mr Holmes said.

"It's extremely disingenuous for hospital management to cut its bed capacity and services to this scale and pretend that it's part of a 'normal summer shutdown' protocol.

"These restructure arrangements will have implications for drug and alcohol services, palliative care, rehabilitation, medical and numerous surgical wards.

"Not to mention the impact on the surrounding hospitals that will be forced to cope with extra patients, those who have to be turned away from St Vincent's Hospital.

"While we acknowledge the emergency department services will continue to operate at St Vincent's, questions remain over where they will admit any seriously injured or unwell patients. It won't take long to fill the 50 per cent of beds left open.

"Days out from Christmas and with uncertainty surrounding the implications for nursing staff and the community, we are calling on the NSW Minister for Health to intervene.

"St Vincent's Hospital is operated by a not-for-profit health organisation under a special, affiliated health agreement with the NSW Government – it is appropriate for the Health Minister to step in and ensure the community is provided access to the public health services it rightly deserves."

Mr Holmes confirmed the NSWNMA was considering filing a dispute in the Fair Work Commission on behalf of the affected nursing staff. Unless urgent improvements were implemented, Mr Holmes said many staff would end up on on-call rosters and likely work excessive hours.

Many casual nursing staff are also faced with a complete loss of income during the length of the restructure, while permanent staff have questioned their ability to transfer appropriately to other specialised wards or units within the hospital.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Brett Holmes, General Secretary, NSWNMA 0414 550 324



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Gia Hayne, Media Advisor, NSWNMA 0488 015 317