



# NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Small staffing reprieve for John Hunter nurses and midwives**

Nurses and midwives at John Hunter Hospital have celebrated a victory after Hunter New England Local Health District capitulated on several staffing and policy issues thrashed out during an industrial dispute.

Following four months of conciliation before the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW, Hunter New England LHD has reached consensus with the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA), a move welcomed by the NSWNMA's John Hunter Hospital Branch members.

Acting General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Judith Kiejda, said the outcomes were a win for hundreds of nurses and midwives who have been hammered by safe staffing and workload concerns for many months.

"We're certainly pleased Hunter New England LHD has recognised its policy for follow-up phone calls to discharged patients was nonsensical and they will no longer be prioritised above the care needs of inpatients at John Hunter Hospital," said Ms Kiejda.

"Our members welcome Hunter New England LHD's efforts to amend its policy on replacing unplanned leave. They've reassured us nursing and midwifery staff will no longer be replaced with someone of a lower classification until all avenues to backfill the vacancy are exhausted, including the use of overtime.

"This has been a significant issue which often leads to a dilution of the skill mix among remaining staff and puts enormous pressure on the senior nurses trying to manage a clinical workload and assist other nurses with their patients.

"The staffing of close observation beds and the use of 'specials', or one-to-one nursing care, has also been a long running issue at John Hunter. This can cause a heightened level of anxiety among nurses because they're effectively running short staffed.

"Fortunately, the amendments Hunter New England LHD has proposed will hopefully address these concerns and ensure additional staff can be secured promptly if close observation beds or 'specials' are required."

The NSWNMA confirmed it would continue to monitor the situation closely at John Hunter Hospital over the coming weeks to ensure Hunter New England LHD delivers on all of its commitments and safe staffing levels return across the facility.

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