



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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Cumberland nurses raise patient safety fears over light rail corridor

Genuine fears for mental health patients at risk of walking in front of a passing tram is among the concerns raised by nursing staff at Cumberland Hospital, the largest acute mental health campus in Western Sydney, about to be cut in half by a new light rail corridor.

Fed up with vague consultations regarding the Parramatta Light Rail project – earmarked to run through the middle of Cumberland Hospital campus – members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) are taking their concerns to the local community.

NSWNMA Assistant General Secretary, Judith Kiejda, said Cumberland Hospital Branch representatives had tried repeatedly to raise legitimate concerns for patient safety and implications regarding the site's redevelopment, yet they have continued to be ignored.

"Since the light rail project was given the green light last year, our members have been trying to obtain details about the potential impacts," said Ms Kiejda.

"At first, we were reassured the state government had thoroughly investigated the light rail proposal and plans were being developed to relocate services into new mental health facilities within the expanding Westmead Hospital precinct nearby.

"However, this proposal was scrapped and our members were advised the current Cumberland Hospital site would instead be redeveloped.

"Four months ago, nursing staff finally received an overview of the state government's plans to locate a light rail corridor through the middle of the campus, impacting on several acute mental health units, as well as daily operations, safety and security measures across the facility.

"Not to mention the implications for nursing staff responding to an emergency if they're located on the opposite side of the light rail corridor when a tram is approaching.

"The government has been quick to focus on the benefits of increased public transport access for Western Sydney's growing population, yet they've failed to discuss the impacts of running trams directly through one of Sydney's largest acute mental health facilities.

"Since the beginning of the year, our members have been raising widespread concerns regarding safety standards, serious short staffing and isolation issues already present across the campus.

"These issues have all been compounded by the lack of proper consultation processes relating to this significant workplace change, including the closure of some mental health units due to the redevelopment and the deletion of several nursing positions."

Site preparation works began this week, prompting a vote by concerned Branch members to take industrial action regarding new admissions to Cumberland Hospital.

The NSWNMA was subsequently called to appear in the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (NSW IRC) on Tuesday and recommendations were made against the industrial action proceeding.



The NSWNMA met with representatives from Western Sydney Local Health District to discuss members' concerns yesterday afternoon.

As a result, Transport for NSW has agreed to halt its planned works until issues raised by the NSWNMA are addressed and further staff consultations and risk assessments occur.

Other site preparation work by Health Infrastructure will continue and both parties are due to reappear before the NSW IRC next week.

The NSWNMA Cumberland Hospital branch confirmed they will discuss their concerns publicly during a community rally at the Cumberland Hospital site next Monday (16 September) at 3pm.

Media are welcome to attend.

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