



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION

MEDIA RELEASE

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Cuts to Murwillumbah ED despite rising presentations

Emergency department staff at Murwillumbah District Hospital are stunned and in fear for patient safety, after revelations Northern NSW Local Health District will slash rostered nursing hours, despite patient presentations at the facility continuing to rise.

Members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) Murwillumbah Hospital branch were among those notified that at least three full-time equivalent nurses will go, following a review of Ballina, Byron Central, Maclean and Murwillumbah emergency departments.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, said members were understandably outraged by the decision, which comes exactly 12 months from the Berejiklian Government's election commitment of 5000 extra nurses and midwives, 282 of which were earmarked for Northern NSW.

"This decision is nothing short of shameful and flies in the face of the NSW Health Minister's commitment last year to bolster nursing staff numbers across our regional hospitals," said Mr Holmes.

"Removing 3.08 full-time equivalent nursing staff (or 230 nursing hours a fortnight) from Murwillumbah Hospital will undoubtedly increase risks for the remaining emergency department staff and exacerbate the potential for adverse incidences.

"You cannot safely run an emergency department with less nursing staff, especially if you're constantly relying on on-call doctors for support. We've already witnessed the [tragic consequences of this at Tenterfield](#), yet the Local Health District appears resolute to find savings at any cost."

NSWNMA Murwillumbah Branch delegate, Angela Gittus, said the need to increase staffing at one hospital should never result in cuts to another hospital.

"We've been told the nursing hours cut from Murwillumbah emergency department will be redirected most likely to Ballina District Hospital," said Ms Gittus.

"The proposal represents a 24% cut in total nursing hours and will have a significant impact on the quality and timeliness of care the remaining nurses can provide to patients in the ED.

"Our branch absolutely supports other ED's in the region having safe and appropriate staffing, but what we oppose is the Local Health District effectively robbing Peter to pay Paul. It's not acceptable.

"Our community values the care it receives at Murwillumbah Hospital and we will fight to ensure we can continue to provide them with the safe patient care they deserve."

The NSWNMA is supporting members as consultation regarding the proposed changes continue. Lismore MP Janelle Saffin has launched a community petition in relation to the emergency department cuts and plans to raise the issue when the NSW Parliament resumes tomorrow.

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