



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

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Staffing concerns widespread at Port Macquarie Base Hospital

Battling excessive workloads and chronic understaffing across multiple wards and theatres, members of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) fear patient safety is being compromised at Port Macquarie Base Hospital.

Mid North Coast Local Health District will open extra beds inside a new ward from tomorrow (9 November) to accommodate increased activity, as elective surgery returns to pre-pandemic levels.

Members of the NSWNMA Port Macquarie Hospital Branch passed a resolution on Friday opposing the opening of the new ward and are seeking a commitment from management to stop opening beds across multiple wards until there is adequate permanent staff available.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, said serious staffing concerns were already raised with management, after data collected by the union showed less full-time equivalent (FTE) nurses rostered on the hospital's four medical and surgical wards compared to nine years ago.

"Despite patient activity and acuity continuing to rise, the hospital's own data shows nurse staffing levels have gone backwards, prompting widespread concerns over safe patient care," said Mr Holmes.

"For example, more than 40 shifts on a single ward were still to be filled this month. That is the equivalent of 328 nursing hours, which will have to be covered by casuals or overtime. Meanwhile, the hospital continues to open further beds without adequate permanent staff recruited.

"We're calling on management to urgently fill the current nurse vacancies across multiple wards, including operating theatres, and we're seeking additional nursing staff to be recruited to meet demand.

"Our members are constantly receiving text messages asking if they can pick up extra shifts. This heavy reliance on nurses working overtime cannot continue.

"The Port Macquarie community has suffered through elective surgery delays thanks to COVID-19. Now the Local Health District wants to power through the backlog and open up more beds with less staff across its medical and surgical wards.

"It's not safe for patients and it's unsafe to continue relying on the goodwill of nurses to battle through excessive amounts of overtime.

"Port Macquarie residents deserve an adequately resourced public hospital. Management must recruit more nursing staff immediately.

"This is another example of why the Upper House [inquiry into hospital services in regional NSW](#) is vital. We're encouraging the local community to let the Berejiklian Government know this is not good enough."

****NSWNMA members will rally outside Port Macquarie Base Hospital on *Wednesday, 11 November at 9.30am* to raise awareness of the staffing and workload issues, as well as the 0.3% public sector wage freeze and recent decision to cap their wages at 1.5% from next year.**

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