

ANMF NEWSFLASH

North West Regional Hospital Surgical Ward Safe Hospitals Save Lives

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) members have articulated ongoing staffing and workload issues and endorsed the ANMF raising a Step 1 Grievance.

The key issues that significantly impact both staff wellbeing and patient care include:

1. **Missed or Interrupted Meal Breaks:** These breaks have become routinely missed or interrupted due to workload pressures, depriving staff of essential rest.
2. **Increased Double Shifts:** Staff are taking on additional shifts, which leads to fatigue and increases potential safety risks for both staff and patients.
3. **Inadequate Skill Mix:** Skill levels on staff are often insufficient and may pose safety risks.
4. **Associate Nursing Unit Manger (NUM) Hours:** ANUMs are rostered from direct care hours but are unavailable for direct care due to their administrative duties needed to run shifts safely.
5. **Opening beds in the discharge lounge:** Whilst members understand that opening discharge lounge beds is necessary to relieve bed block the current practice of opening and closing the lounge at short notice creates multiple flow on workload concerns. The additional nursing staff is sourced often by double shifts and/or extra shifts from the surgical ward roster. The room itself does not have a bathroom, and the toilet is in a long narrow room that is not fit for purpose. It is almost impossible to provide patient assistance and/or for a patient who uses a mobility aid. Short notice admissions result in unsuitable patients allocated to this room.

6. **Roster Concerns:** Lack of consultation and communication with filling of short notice shifts. Members reiterate that there appears an unwillingness to staff up when patient acuity is high, the skill mix is a major concern. The replacement of short-term leave appears to occur by utilising the float nurse (if there is one rostered) or the educator admissions, 3 patients with Underwater Sealed Drains (UWSD) - 1 of which was removed.
7. **Accessing agency Nurses:** Onerous and time consuming requirements to source agency nurses.

Members understand that the hospital may face staffing challenges; however, the current conditions now pose daily risks to both patient care and staff safety.

Requested Actions

To address these unsafe conditions, members request the following actions:

1. **Immediate Staffing Review:** Assess staffing levels in the Surgical Ward to ensure daily skill mix is reflective of safe staffing levels. Establish robust role delineation and communication for short notice shift replacement that reviews not just the shift at hand but the impact on subsequent shifts.
2. **Reduction of Double Shifts and Short Staffed Shifts:** Develop a plan to reduce reliance on double shifts and understaffed shifts, ensuring staff can provide safe, quality care without burnout. One potential solution would be to increase the benchmarked Full Time Equivalent (FTE) to 36 patients to allow baseline staffing that supports the opening of the “discharge lounge” beds.
3. **Assurance of Meal and Rest Breaks:** Commit to providing breaks as required under the Enterprise Agreement (EA) and health and safety standards.
4. **Data and Consultation for Sustainable Solutions:** Consult with members and their ANMF official to create viable solutions to staffing and workload pressures.



5. **Roster ANUM Hours as Indirect Care:** Ensure that ANUM hours are rostered as indirect hours, separate from direct care hours.
6. **Employ Clinical Coaches in Indirect Care Roles:** Roster clinical coaches, on day shifts on weekends and public holidays and all afternoon shifts, from indirect hours, separate from direct care.
7. **Establishment Review:** Review the current establishment, consider moving long term positions that are unlikely to be taken up by the incumbent to a central pool thus allowing permanent appointment to vacant positions and decreasing the use of agency nurses. Commit to filling all vacancies within 3 months or sooner.
8. **Confirm Authority:** Review the process for accessing agency contracts.

The ANMF expects a written response by **close of business Friday 17 January 2025**. Once this is received the ANMF will meet with members to discuss the response and seek direction for next steps.

The ANMF Tasmanian Branch is 8000 plus members strong! Supporting nurses, midwives, and care workers as the only union in Tasmania employing nurses, midwives and care workers to represent members. This is why our Organisers and Member Support Team are uniquely positioned to understand your experiences, represent you in your workplace, and offer industrial advice that's relevant to you.

Authorised by Emily Shepherd, ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary
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