

ANMF NEWSFLASH

Whittle Ward

Palliative Care Unit Benchmarking Presented Wednesday 19 August 2026

The 2026 Whittle Ward benchmarking proposal was presented on Wednesday 19 August 2026. It recommends maintaining current direct care staffing at 15.80 employable Full-Time Equivalent (FTE), with no increase to direct care nursing levels for 2026.

The proposal continues to use safe staffing methodology rather than the standard Nursing Hours per Patient Day (NHPPD) eCalculator, recognising Whittle Ward's unique role as a small, standalone 10-bed Specialist Palliative Care Unit.

Key Points

- Direct care staffing remains at 15.80 employable FTE, or 16.99 total direct FTE including relief.
- Whittle Ward is proposed to be benchmarked at 100% occupancy.
- Occupancy increased insignificantly from 79.9% in 2024 to 86.3% in 2025.
- Emergency admissions increased to just over 17%.
- The Average Length of Stay (ALOS) has increased from 8 to 9 days.
- More than 55% of patients required two or more staff for physical care tasks across reviewed Resource Utilisation Group – Activities of Daily Living (RUG-ADLs) data.
- Not much change in Diagnostic Related Grouping (DRGs) over 2024-25.
- The combined direct and indirect employable FTE is 17.33, with total FTE including relief of 18.79.
- Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC) working across P1 and Whittle FTE of 0.53 will now be included in indirect hours.

Questions Raised and Responses Provided

- **Roster gaps and vacancies:** Members raised concerns about significant roster shortfalls, including 28 unfilled shifts this month and an estimated 1.4 FTE vacancy.
- **Vacant FTE:** Two staff had recently vacated 0.5 and 0.6 FTE positions; those positions could not be continued due to the establishment being at capacity.
- **Management response:** Management advised that Registered Nurse (RN) and Enrolled Nurse (EN) vacancies have since been identified, with approximately 0.53 FTE permanent EN – (this will not be vacant for a few months yet) and 1.68 fixed-term RN FTE with internal Expressions of Interest (EOI) expected to be advertised within the next week. Members are concerned that valuable staff members have been lost due to establishment capacity oversights.
- **Secondments and leave replacement:** Management attributed some shortfalls to staff secondments elsewhere in the Tasmanian Health Service (THS) with the Mobility program. Members remain concerned that sick leave is not consistently backfilled.
- **Staffing to 100% occupancy:** Members questioned whether the ward is staffed to 100% capacity. Management advised staffing will fluctuate and be flexed according to demand due to variances of the small and specialist nature of the ward.
- **Workload:** Staff advised workload is manageable when the ward is fully staffed.
- **Extended Care Assistant (ECA) support:** A 1.0 FTE ECA has been employed since the last benchmarking and is currently rostered on weekday night shift. Members advised workload is noticeably harder when the ECA is on days off or on leave.
- **Additional ECA recruitment:** Management advised 2.0 FTE further ECA positions have progressed through interviews and are now awaiting approval from the Director. With the aim of providing 1.0 ECA coverage 24/7 across all shifts.
- **CNC role:** Management advised the 0.53 FTE CNC is an indirect role and will not reduce direct care staffing. Due to the nature of the shared role of the CNC across both P1 and Whittle Ward, members are concerned that they are not receiving the 0.53 CNC support that is now proposed to be benchmarked.
- **Clinical education support:** The ANMF asked if a Clinical Coach position has been further considered since management suggested this when member concerns were raised after 2025 Benchmarking outcome.
- **Management Response:** Clinical Coach has not been further considered - the Clinical Nurse Educator (CNE) is active and supportive on the floor, and an additional 0.4 FTE CNE position will soon be advertised.



Next Steps

- The ANMF will release a survey and encourages all members to participate. The ANMF will review the survey results post **close of business on Wednesday 26th August 2026** and feedback to THS on **Friday 28th August 2026**.
- A member meeting has been requested for **Wednesday 26th August 2026 at 1500hrs**, the ANMF encourages all staff to attend.
- Members should raise concerns early so they can be considered as part of ongoing benchmarking and workload monitoring.
- The ANMF will continue advocating for safe, transparent staffing that reflects the specialist work undertaken at Whittle Ward.

Survey: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/01a021f16cbd7e8cb464929b14f35c19>

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Authorised by Emily Shepherd, ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary
21 August 2026