

30 April 2020

ANMF Respond to Government's COVID-19 Outbreak Interim Report

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) today welcomed the *COVID-19 North West Regional Hospital Outbreak Interim Report*, released by the Premier of Tasmania, Peter Gutwein.

ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary Emily Shepherd said the report highlights the most likely cause of the COVID-19 outbreak was from passengers from the Ruby Princess cruise ship who became patients on the North West Coast.

"These were the first reported cases at the North West Region Hospital," Ms Shepherd said.

"The ANMF welcomes and supports the identified recommendations of the report and the swift implementation of these at the North West Regional Hospital and beyond.

"The outbreak at the North West Regional Hospital and the North West Private Hospital has been and remains a tragic situation. Our thoughts and condolences are with the families who have lost loved ones.

"The Report outlines what our members were already aware of in terms of the Ruby Princess bringing the first cases of COVID-19 to the area.

"What has been further enforced is that we cannot underestimate the virulence of COVID-19 and the ease with which it can spread. This is particularly true when people are infected but asymptomatic and therefore unaware that they have the virus."

Ms Shepherd said the Premier emphasised the aim of the report was not to lay blame but rather identify outcomes and use these learnings to improve practices in healthcare across the state.

"Along with the Report's recommendations, ultimately learning and taking immediate action is the most important outcome.

"We are particularly pleased with the findings that prioritise local level infection control as a priority, including infectious disease specialists, Infection Control Nurses, and Clinical Nurses Educators.

"This includes the governance process at the local level, along with position descriptions for the outbreak management team to improve local support and communication with staff and the Emergency Control Centre."

Ms Shepherd said that both the North West Regional Hospital and North West Private Hospital need increased on the ground clinical support and improved communication, as has been recommended.

"It is pleasing to see transparency around these concerns and what strategies have and will continue to be done to address them.

"We also welcome the support provided by the Premier and Minister for Health Sarah Courtney to healthcare workers at the North West Regional Hospital during this morning's media conference.

"The overall aim of the Report is to identify what practices need to be improved so that events like this do not happen again.

"The ANMF agrees with the Premier that this report is not about laying blame. It is about recognising the hard work and best efforts of all nurses, midwives, and care workers in an unprecedented situation.

"Our members continue to work furiously to contain COVID-19. This report simply highlights this, while expanding on ways in which workers can be better supported to ensure that a similar outbreak does not occur again."

The ANMF will continue to support members and advocate on their behalf to ensure that these recommendations are fully implemented at all healthcare sites.

"Our aim is to ensure that all nurses, midwives, and care workers are fully supported to achieve the best patient outcomes possible and ensure that they and their patients are safe."

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