

30 March 2021

Nurses lodge Emergency Department staffing matter with the Tasmanian Industrial Commission

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF), alongside our members at the Launceston General Hospital Emergency Department, are incredibly disappointed that despite continued attempts to engage with decision makers in the Tasmanian Health Service and the Department of Health, a solution to the dire staffing situation at the Launceston General Hospital has not be forthcoming.

As a result, ANMF has lodged an application with the Tasmanian Industrial Commission to seek their assistance in resolving this long-standing issue.

“In the lead up to the state election, ANMF members are desperate to have political parties make the Launceston General Hospital Emergency Department’s unsustainable workloads a priority. Access block and a commitment to resolving it must be a key focus point,” said ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary Emily Shepherd.

Despite representatives from the Department of Health indicating weeks ago that the business case for additional nursing staff was still ‘under consideration’, no progress has been reported to the ANMF. As a result, members continue to struggle with enormous workloads, overflowing waiting rooms, and ramped patients being brought in by ambulance.

“Over the past two weeks, some of our most seasoned and resilient ANMF nursing members are reported to have experienced the worst shifts they have ever encountered in over thirty years as an Emergency Department nurse.”

“This has included moving admitted patients out of the Department into chairs in the waiting room as there was no space to accommodate additional presentations that needed to be seen.”

“The stress that members have been under as a result of access block has been phenomenal. It continues to cause stress and fatigue amongst nursing staff and has resulted in some making the decision to leave the Department.”

While politicians' campaign in the state election, nurses at the Launceston General Hospital will be looking for robust health policies. Policies that not only address the short-term problem of resourcing the Emergency Department with enough staff to deal with access block, but for long term strategies to address the over reliance on acute hospitals by tackling the root cause with preventative health care and education.

Both Labor and Liberal Governments have failed to address the significant issues being seen at the Launceston General Hospital Emergency Department. The Department currently has one of the country's worst wait times.

Despite this, ANMF members are hopeful that in the midst of an election campaign, Labor, Liberal, Greens or independents, might finally make the commitments required to resolve the issue. If not, members will take the assistance of the Tasmanian Industrial Commission to do so, either via conciliation or arbitration.

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