

16 March 2021

Dire staffing woes at the Royal Hobart Hospital

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF), has been contacted by members from multiple clinical areas across the Royal Hobart Hospital and Tasmanian Health Service South, regarding safe staffing concerns.

Members are reporting regular, if not daily or multiple daily, text messages from their clinical areas requesting that they pick up extra shifts due to rostered shortfalls or unexpected leave. In addition, members are reporting that there are 900 rostered shortfalls for the month of April and a 15% vacancy rate across Tasmanian Health Services South.

ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary, Emily Shepherd said today, "it is incredibly concerning that staff shortages have continued and are now reaching crisis point. Members should not be receiving daily contact asking them to pick up extra shifts, come in early, or do double shifts just to meet basic safe staffing levels."

Members are reporting that this is already having a negative impact on staff and patients. Theatre lists are being cancelled and in one instance, a post theatre patient was flown out to Austin Health in Victoria due to the required level of patient care delivery being unavailable at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

"Despite the projected rostered shortfalls for April, already members are feeling the effects of insufficient staffing. The fact that this is now also impacting on patient care, indicates that staffing has already reached critical levels."

"The ANMF have long advocated for the Department of Health and the Tasmanian Government to make retention and recruitment of nursing and midwifery staff a priority, this was in fact the cornerstone of the last public sector industrial campaign, Retain.Recruit.Recognise."

"ANMF members working at the Royal Hobart Hospital are very distressed. They have been working incredibly hard on the frontline as part of the COVID-19 response, but now they face the prospect of entering into winter with insufficient staffing to even meet current clinical needs, let alone increased presentations."

The ANMF has written to Royal Hobart Hospital management requesting an urgent response to member concerns in the hope that a plan of action to address the staffing deficits is in place, rather than relying on current staff to fill the gaps.

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