



NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Lismore mental health nurses take action over staffing cuts

Lismore Mental Health Branch of the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has confirmed it will be forced to close beds from next week, due to major concerns over patient and staff safety following planned cuts to clinical nursing staff levels.

During a mid-week meeting, Branch members unanimously passed a resolution to commence the bed closures from Monday morning, unless Northern NSW Local Health District immediately agrees to maintain current staffing levels.

Assistant General Secretary of the NSWNMA, Judith Kiejda, said nursing staff across the mental health unit fear their professional obligation for safe patient care will be compromised if local management proceeds with its decision to cut jobs and nursing hours.

"Our members are extremely concerned about these cuts to staffing, which will remove around 296 nursing hours per week, placing both patients and staff inside the unit at serious risk," Ms Kiejda said.

"It is incomprehensible that management would shuffle bed numbers like a deck of cards across three new units within Lismore Mental Health facility, cut a senior nursing position, reduce clinical nursing staff hours and expect the remaining staff to be able to provide the appropriate level of care required.

"Management have been considering this restructure at Lismore Mental Health for some time, but have failed to consider any of the concerns raised by staff or our Association during this process."

Under the restructure, Northern NSW LHD will divide the current 40-bed unit into a 16-bed Older Person Mental Health Unit and a 24-bed Adult Acute Mental Health Unit, which will include an 8-bed Close Observation Unit. A Nursing Unit Manager position will be abolished and further a reduction of nurse staffing hours will commence mid next month.

Ms Kiejda said to date local management has not confirmed how the restructure and changed systems of work will impact on response policies.

"In the interests of safety for the patients and staff, Branch members have confirmed they will close two beds within the Close Observation Unit and four beds within the Adult Acute Mental Health Unit from 7am on Monday, to reflect reasonable workloads expected of nursing staff," said Ms Kiejda.

"The Branch is calling on management to immediately reverse their restructure decisions and consult further with the Association."

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