



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

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Staff raise safety concerns at Leeton hospital

Ongoing patient safety and staffing issues at Leeton District Hospital have prompted renewed calls by the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) for extra nursing staff.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Brett Holmes, said despite raising the issues repeatedly with Murrumbidgee Local Health District, they still remain.

"Our members have been calling on Murrumbidgee Local Health District for more than a year to address widespread concerns in Leeton hospital's emergency department," said Mr Holmes.

"At a minimum, we need two registered nurses to be on duty in the emergency department at all times.

"Expecting one registered nurse to manage patients in the emergency department when there are no doctors available in Leeton is simply not good enough.

"Currently, the emergency department is covered by two registered nurses for just eight hours a day, leaving nurses to work in isolation for the remaining 16 hours and no doctor on site between 8pm and 8am most nights.

"Following a Work Health and Safety inspection in May 2018, several issues were brought to the Local Health District's attention, including nursing staff repeatedly being forced to work in isolation.

"Working in isolation is not only a problem for individual staff, it has flow on implications for the remaining staff and the level of safe patient care they can provide.

"The physical layout of the hospital is a contributing factor with the emergency department located on the ground floor, separate to the rest of the hospital.

"As a declared mental health facility, the emergency department is also required to assist in the assessment of patients who present with a suspected mental health condition, using a video conference with the mental health team at Wagga Wagga.

"We're aware there's been a number of violence and aggression incidences in the emergency department recently, prompting calls for improved protocols and system upgrades to better protect staff.

"A lack of security officers at the hospital is also of concern, with only one full-time Health and Security Assistant employed and no ready access to local emergency services. Leeton police station is not staffed 24 hours and the nearest station is 60 kilometres away at Griffith."

The NSWNMA confirmed it is continuing raise issues with Murrumbidgee Local Health District directly and intends to keep the local community informed.

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