

Mr Blake Adair-Roberts
Division Secretary, Allied Health
Health Services Union NSW

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Response to HSU Allied Health Staffing Dispute

Dear Blake,

Thank you for your recent email, dated **1 November 2024**, outlining the outcome of the Health Services Union's (HSU) meeting with your members. Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) values the constructive progress achieved so far through our dispute meetings, as part of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission conciliation process.

We are encouraged by the HSU's decision to extend the moratorium on the current bans until 8 November 2024, which reflects our mutual commitment to dialogue and resolution. NSLHD seeks confirmation from the HSU regarding its ongoing work bans, which continue to impact patient safety across the district. In addition to those work bans currently withdrawn, it is NSLHD's primary position that the remainder of all work bans are removed.

To those specific matters raised in your email, we provide the following response:

1. *That there will be no reduction in staffing below the funded FTE base during this financial year which concludes 1 July 2025.*

As stated in previous meetings, NSLHD will consult with staff and unions before implementing permanent staffing reductions or significant organisational changes. Additionally, General Managers are aware of the agreed process for AH vacancies to progress through to the District ATF committee. For clarity, this includes submitting any current AH applications, previously deferred or declined, for review.

2. *That there will not be any reduction in Allied Health staffing without formal consultation.*

- a. *This includes any reduction in staff that would arise from not filling existing or upcoming vacancies, including backfill for long-term leave.*

- b. *This includes any reduction in staff that would arise from not renewing fixed term contracts.*

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Northern Sydney Local Health District is located on the traditional lands of the Eora Nation

NSLHD reaffirms its commitment to ensuring any decisions regarding staffing levels are carefully reviewed with the goal of minimising impact on current FTE. We reaffirm that any significant changes to staffing, service delivery, or employment arrangements will be subject to formal consultation with impacted staff and their industrial association in line with our industrial obligations.

As an extension, any decision about existing or upcoming vacancies, including backfill for long-term leave, will undergo thorough review via the established ATF process.

Similarly, the renewal of temporary and fixed-term contracts will depend on the original purpose of the contract. For instance, a fixed-term contract covering parental leave will conclude upon the substantive employee's return. All requests for backfill, including temporary contracts, will continue to be assessed via the agreed ATF process.

3. *That managers will neither be pressured nor directed not to apply for Approval To Fill (ATF) vacancies, whether they are temporary or ongoing.*

NSLHD affirms that all managers are fully supported to submit positions through the ATF portal to fill vacancies, whether temporary or ongoing. NSLHD encourages managers to utilise the ATF process to address genuine staffing needs, and no manager will be pressured or directed otherwise. This approach reflects our commitment to transparency, consistency, and CORE values.

4. *Clarification on the 6% budget savings -Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital (HKH)*

As discussed in our 31 October 2024 meeting, HKH is currently exploring a range of budget-saving initiatives, prioritising operational efficiencies such as optimising goods and services, enhancing rostering practices, and managing the use of premium labour. These efforts are hospital-wide and not solely focused on AH staffing.

NSLHD confirms that any proposed staffing changes will involve formal consultation with staff and the HSU in accordance with our industrial obligations. We reiterate our commitment that any reductions in staffing will not be enacted without comprehensive consultation. Any proposals developed by Heads of Department that impact upon staffing levels will be subject to full consultation.

Additionally, any previous communications suggesting enactment of these measures will be reviewed to ensure compliance with our previously stated consultation obligations, and rescinded where necessary to uphold our commitment to transparency and procedural fairness.

5. *Clarification on communications regarding staffing reductions*

NSLHD confirms that any prior statements or communications indicating that staffing reductions would occur immediately and without consultation are not accurate and do not reflect District policy. We are fully committed to rigorous consultation processes before any staffing adjustments are made.

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We recognise the importance of collaboration with the HSU on key matters and remain dedicated to working closely with the HSU and their members.

If you require any further information concerning this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Matt Byrne, Director Policy, Planning & Industrial Relations, on 0431 487 983 or at Matthew.Byrne@health.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Rophail
A/Executive Director Operations

Date: 07 November 2024

Cc: Paula Willisroft , Executive Director People and Culture
Matt Byrne, Director Policy, Planning & Industrial Relations
Lucy Barrett, Workplace Relations Manager