



ACT
Government

**Canberra Health
Services**

Nathan Collins
Organiser, Public Health
HSU NSW/ACT/QLD
Level 2, 109 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Collins

Consultation – Staffing On-Call Arrangements

Canberra Health Services (CHS), Sterilising Services (SS) provides reusable medical device (RMD) reprocessing services to Canberra Hospital (CH) Sterilising Services Unit (SSU), the Central Reprocessing Unit (CRU) located within the Gastroenterology and Hepatology Unit at CH, Calvary Public Hospital Bruce (CPHB) SSU, and some private clinics within the ACT and surrounding areas of NSW. Sterilising Services also provides instrument management services to CH and CPHB, which includes purchasing new RMDs and facilitating servicing and repairs and maintenance of existing RMDs.

Sterilising Services Health Service Officers (HSO) are required to participate in a rotating roster. The rotating shift roster requires the employees to work all shifts within a 24 hour/7 days per week roster and across all Sterilising Services sites.

SSU operating hours vary between sites and are based on operational demand. Operational hours for each site is listed below:

Mitchell

Monday – Friday: 7.00am to 9.00pm

CH

Every day (365 days per year): 12:00am – 11:59pm (24 hours)

CPHB

Monday – Friday: 7.00am to 11.00pm

Saturday: 8:00am – 5:30pm

CRU

Monday – Friday: 7.00am to 7:30pm

On-call arrangements are in place for Sterilising Services personnel at CH during shutdown periods and public holidays. Staff may be called to attend work if additional trauma theatres are operating, or Sterilising Services personnel fall sick and require replacing. Unfortunately, there are no on-call arrangements in place to cover Sundays, public holidays, or shutdown periods at CPHB.

CPHB has contacted the Sterilising Services Director numerous times on Sundays, public holidays and shutdown periods requesting Sterilising Services personnel immediately attend site to reprocess RMDs that had been used in emergency procedures and would likely be required for re-use if/when another emergency presented. As no staff were rostered on-call, the Sterilising Services Director attended site herself to reprocess urgent RMDs; however, the last time this occurred the Director was not in Canberra at the time of the call and could not attend. Although there was no adverse patient outcome for this incident, there is a high risk to patient safety should emergency equipment not be available for use if/when required.

Considering the numerous after-hours requests for RMD reprocessing services, no staff being available to attend site when requested, and the risk posed to patients if sterile RMDs are not available for emergency use, it has become evident that rostering staff on-call during non-operational hours is required to ensure adverse patient outcomes are avoided.

All Sterilising Services frontline position descriptions and advertisements include the following statement: "This position involves participating in a rotating roster. The rotating shift roster will require the employee to work all shifts within a 24 hour/7 days per week roster, including on-call. This position also involves working across all Sterilising Services' sites (Mitchell, Canberra Hospital including the Central Reprocessing Unit and Calvary Public Hospital)." Irrespective of this statement within the duty statement, night shift, weekend and on-call shifts have historically been rostered on a volunteer basis. However, this method of rostering staff has become problematic and is no longer operationally viable due to a lack of suitably qualified and experienced volunteers.

Sterilising Services proposes that the forty HSO, seven Technical Officer Level 2 and two Technical Officer Level 1 positions participate in a rotating on-call roster, which would equate to approximately three days per year, per employee. This figure may change according to planned and unplanned leave; however, the intent is that rotation of staff would be fair, equitable and transparent. Staff would be required to work at either CPHB, CH dependent on the needs of the units when rostered on-call. Hours that require coverage for on-call are as follows:

CPHB

Saturday: 5:00pm – 11:59pm
Sunday: 12:00am – 11:59pm
Monday: 12:00am – 7:00am
Public Holidays: 12:00am – 7:00am

CHS

Public Holidays 8:00am – 8:00pm

Consultation feedback

To allow you a genuine opportunity to contribute to and influence the decision-making process prior to a decision being made, the consultation period for the proposed staffing on-call arrangement will be seven calendar days from the date of this letter.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the consultation process or to request additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 5124 2283 or via email sandra.wheeler@act.gov.au.

I look forward to your response and contribution to this consultation process.

Yours sincerely
Sandra Wheeler

Sandra Wheeler

Sandra Wheeler
Assistant Director, Operations
Sterilising Services
Infrastructure & Health Services Support
Canberra Health Services

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CC: Sandra Sturt A/g HR Business Partner

