

Award Reform - our time is now!

It's no secret that the wages and conditions for allied health workers have fallen behind because of the wages cap which was in place for over 10-years. With the NSW Labor Government lifting the cap, we now have a chance to fight for fair pay and conditions.

HSU delegates have spent two years putting together new draft Awards for allied health. Now it's time for you to vote.

All HSU members will be provided with a copy of the draft award and the key claims to review. This document addresses some of the frequently asked questions. Please take the time to review this document before having your say!

How were these claims developed?

Over the past 24 months HSU members have volunteered their time by participating in HSU Industrial Advisory Committees for each occupational stream to collaboratively develop these claims for Allied Health workers.

These Industrial Advisory Committees were open to all HSU financial members to join and designed to be inclusive and representative of each profession with mandated requirements to have a mix of metropolitan and regional representation.

These Industrial Advisory Committees have voted to endorse the draft claims that are now being presented to members

What is an Award?

An Award contains the minimum wages and conditions of employment of a group of workers. It can be determined by agreement between an employer and the union representing the workers or can be determined by the Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales.

Why are we amalgamating Awards?

There are dozens of NSW Health Awards covering HSU Allied Health members. These Awards are inconsistent and vague leading to disputes and poor compliance. Most of these documents have not been changed in years.

These documents also spread HSU members into small and fragmented groups. In other states like Victoria and Queensland, Allied Health professionals are represented in fewer awards and can campaign on issues with a larger and more impactful collective. The fragmentation into smaller awards in NSW requires negotiating individually for each profession one-by-one making achieving improvements for Allied Health members far more difficult.

How was the decision to amalgamate made?

Members endorsed amalgamation in 2023 after an extensive review and consultation period. The following occurred:

- **June 2023:** members of the HSU Health Professional Industrial Advisory Committees began a review to determine the optimal structure. This review assessed three options:
 - **Business as usual** - no change.
 - **Partial amalgamation** - merging like-professional staff and technical staff into 4 Award groups (this occurs in Victoria).
 - **Complete amalgamation** - merging all professional and technical staff into one Award (this occurs in QLD).
- **August 4-11, 2023:** HSU members attended mass-member meetings to receive a briefing on amalgamation proposal.
- **August 18-September 1, 2023:** HSU members invited to provide feedback on proposed Award structure.
- **September 1-September 8, 2023:** HSU Industrial Advisory Committees reviewed feedback and amended structure.
- **September 8, 2023:** HSU members commence 1-week voting period on award amalgamation structure.

This process led to 90%+ endorsement from HSU members to create four Awards (partial amalgamation): Clinical Health and Associated Professionals, Medical Imaging and Radiation, Dental, and Scientific.

What roles are covered by the proposed Clinical Health and Associated Professions Award?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Health Worker • Aboriginal Health Practitioner • Aboriginal Health Education Officer Graduate • Allied Health Assistant • Anaesthetic and Operating Theatre Technician • Audiologist • Art Therapist • Biomedical Engineer • Cardiac Physiologist (previously referred to as Cardiac Technologist) • Child Life Therapist (previously referred to as Play Therapist) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreter • Librarian • Library Assistant • Library Technician • Lived Experience (Peer) Worker (previously referred to as Peer Worker) • Music Therapist • Occupational Therapist • Orthoptist • Orthotist / Prosthetist • Perfusionist • Pharmacist • Pharmacy Assistant
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counsellor• Dialysis Technician• Dietitian• Diversional Therapist• Electronics Technician• Environmental Health Officers• Exercise Physiologist• Genetic Counsellor• Health Manager (See Note 1 below)• Health Promotion Practitioner (previously referred to as Health Education Officer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pharmacy Technician• Physiotherapist• Podiatrist• Psychologist• Sexual Assault Worker• Social Worker• Speech Pathologist• Technical Officers (engaged in assisting Biomedical Engineers)• Welfare Officer
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NOTE 1

Will include employees who have been classified as Health Manager due to the deficiencies in a variety of classification structures within other awards but will be undertaking duties and roles now contemplated by this Award.

What is a “Health Professional” under the CHAP Award?

Health Professional as used in NSW Health awards refers to those working in a defined set of occupations currently under the *NSW Health Service Health Professionals (State) Award*, including: Audiologist, Art Therapist, Counsellor, Dietitian, Diversional Therapist, Exercise Physiologist, Genetic Counsellor, Music Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Orthoptist, Orthotist/Prosthetist, Physiotherapist, Play Therapist, Podiatrist, Sexual Assault Worker, Social Worker, Speech Pathologist, Welfare Officer.

Why don't the drafts include conditions such as leave?

Conditions such as leave, breaks, consultation and payment for higher-grade duties form part of your core conditions. HSU members are currently negotiating to improve core conditions for all HSU NSW Health workers.

To read the complete list of HSU Core Conditions log of claims items, please click here: <https://www.hsu.asn.au/our-latest/award-reform/core-conditions>

What grade/level will I be classified as once the new structure is implemented?

For some occupational streams draft translation tables (showing how current grades and levels align with proposed grades and levels) have been published, for others these will be developed over the course of January. In some cases, translation will be dependent on individual circumstances. These tables are subject to change as they are based on our claims upon the NSW Government – and what we achieve will be determined by the success of our campaign.

Why is there no pay scale for my profession?

The HSU is working hard to ensure that all pay claims are evidence-based and maintain appropriate relativities to other states and groups of workers. We are currently working through the pay structures for several classifications and will release them to members once they have been completed and prior to the end of the consultation period for member feedback.

Why is there no classification structure for my profession?

Classification structures have been developed by member led Industrial Advisory Committees. Some committees are still finalising their draft structures, and they will be circulated to members once the relevant committee has endorsed a draft.

I'm currently paid under a non-Allied Health award. Once the new award comes in, will I be able to transfer across?

The new classification structures are designed to cover all workers within Allied Health. If the role you are currently performing matches one of the classification grades/levels in the new award that you may be eligible to have your role reclassified, but this will depend on the individual circumstances of your role.

HSU members will receive individual advice and support from our industrial officers in cases where members believe their role forms part of the new classification structure but management disagrees.

Are these claims final?

What has been circulated is a draft Award and proposed claims for award reform for Allied Health. HSU members have until 27 January 2025 to provide feedback on these documents and revised versions will be circulated to members for a final vote in March.

Once endorsed by members, these claims are what we are asking the NSW Government for. What we are successful in achieving will depend on how successfully we campaign as a united group of Allied Health workers.

How can I provide feedback and vote on these claims?

HSU members can complete the feedback survey at:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CHAP-Feedback>.

Yes. HSU members have between now and 27 January 2025 to provide feedback on the draft claims. Member feedback will then be consolidated and referred to occupation specific Industrial Advisory Committees to be considered and, where appropriate, incorporated. A final draft of the award and our claims will then be circulated to members, who will vote to either endorse or reject the claims at endorsement meetings and online.

If I join the HSU now, am I able to provide feedback and vote on the claims?

Yes. If you join the union now you will immediately be able to provide feedback in the consultation survey and will be able to vote on the final claims.

What if I don't agree with some of these claims?

HSU members have between now and 26 January 2025 to provide feedback on the draft claims. Members are encouraged to provide this feedback, as the process requires having a breadth of individuals participating in the process. Once member feedback has been considered and, where appropriate, incorporated, a final draft of the Award and our claims will be circulated to members, who will vote to either endorse or reject the claims at endorsement meetings and online.

Can I participate if I am not a member?

No. Only HSU members can provide feedback, vote, or participate in the campaign and our local groups. If you've been thinking about joining the HSU, now is the time.

How will we win the claims?

No matter how rational and reasonable our claims are, success will not be achieved by union officials or members sitting in meetings talking to representatives of NSW Health. Success will come from Allied Health workers joining their union and working together to tell the government, their employer, and their communities that Allied Health workers deserve fair wages and conditions.

The draft award and proposed claims will not be won without a fight. The more active HSU members are in the campaign, the more power members will have to achieve meaningful changes. It's time for all Allied Health workers in NSW Health to join the HSU and build negotiating power. Members can join their Local Organising Network to get involved in the campaign. For more information contact alliedhealth@hsu.asn.au.

The networks are the main way HSU members can keep up to date with the campaign, actively contribute and join with their colleagues to ensure NSW Health, the NSW Government, and their communities hear the voices of Allied Health workers. To get more involved, contact alliedhealth@hsu.asn.au.

Will we need to take industrial action to win these claims?

Industrial action in support of claims for better pay and conditions is a necessary in nearly every campaign of this magnitude. Recently, union members have been effective in achieving substantial increases to their wages and conditions by taking industrial action. When it comes time for industrial action member led Local Organising Networks will determine the nature of any action taken and this will be done in a nuanced way tailored to each occupational stream.

Are these claims realistic?

Yes. While it is rare for any negotiation or campaign to result in every single claim being achieved, these claims reflect a fair and reasonable ask to rectify long term undervaluing of Allied Health workers in the NSW Health system. HSU members are seeking comparable wage rates to those in other states and modern conditions of employment reflecting how workplaces have changed over recent decades. **Our time is now.**

Will NSW Health agree to all of these claims?

It is expected that NSW Health will reject many of our claims when they are first presented, just as NSW Health initially rejected a fair pay rise for paramedics. It is our job to campaign in our workplaces and in our communities to persuade them to endorse as many of our claims as possible. We may not achieve everything but if we work together as a collective, we will be able to make a significant difference to our wages and conditions.

How can we win these new conditions when NSW Health says they have no money?

Budgets are about choices and choices are about values. If the current budget allocated to NSW Health is not adequate to provide fair pay and conditions (including adequate staffing) to allied health workers, then we need to convince the NSW Government (and the NSW public) that this funding needs to be allocated. Our Award reform claims could be paid for many times over by eliminating many of the wasteful inefficiencies we see every day in NSW Health. The Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding will assist with identifying wastage in the health system and their report is due to be released in March.

Does NSW Health know we are running a campaign for award reform?

Yes. Both NSW Health and the NSW Government have agreed that the negotiations to reform the Allied Health awards is well overdue. They expect HSU members to advocate for improvements to their working conditions and to campaign vigorously as workers do in any award campaign.

How much of a difference can I make?

There is strength in numbers. The HSU has proven that when a large portion of a workforce joins together and is actively engaged in campaigning for their rights at work, they are able to achieve significant change. These campaigns aren't held every year and so when they are held it's important that workers join their union and participate.

Why can only HSU members provide feedback and vote?

In the industrial relations negotiation process, employees collectively negotiate through their Union. The HSU represents health care workers in NSW, with the exception of doctors and nurses who have their own union.

To participate in the Union and therefore negotiations, an employee must be a financial member of the Union.