



MEDIA RELEASE

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Queen Elizabeth Hospital nurses join campaign for patient safety

Just days after Emergency Department (ED) nurses at the Royal Adelaide Hospital launched a campaign to end external triaging, their counterparts at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (TQEH) have today followed suit.

Like their RAH colleagues, TQEH nurses are forced to externally triage patients in the ambulance once the facility has 42 patients within its 31-bed Emergency Department.

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary Adj Assoc Prof Elizabeth Dabars AM says TQEH ED nurses are concerned the process has the potential to put them in professional jeopardy.

“When external triaging first started at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the responsibility for this practice rested with Emergency Department Medical Officers,” said Ms Dabars.

“But, as time has passed, the responsibility for this practice has fallen on the nurses—and that’s a situation they find untenable,” she says.

The process sees ED nurses triaging patients waiting in ambulances ramped outside the hospital. Pain management therapy often has to be started in the ambulance, with the patient remaining there while the triage nurse moves on to the next ambulance.

“Like Emergency Department nurses at the RAH, our QEH members are very concerned if they’re expected to be responsible for a patient who could be sitting in an ambulance outside the hospital for several hours,” Ms Dabars says.

“It’s a practice that’s fraught with risk and is understandably creating tension between nurses and ambulance staff.”

Until further notice, TQEH members will be wearing purple scrubs as a visual demonstration of their concerns to management and the community.

The same ‘Purple for Patient Safety’ campaign began at the RAH earlier this week and could escalate into action at TQEH if external triage isn’t abolished.

Media interviews:

ANMF (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars AM on 0402 795 686