



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 30 April 2018 – 12.45pm

RAH nurses launch campaign for patient safety

Emergency Department (ED) nurses at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH) have this week launched a campaign to send a clear message to management that 'enough is enough' when it comes to risking staff and patient safety.

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary Adj Assoc Prof Elizabeth Dabars AM says its RAH ED members unanimously voted to start the campaign, which could escalate into action if conditions don't improve.

"We're talking about extremely tolerant nurses that have been bearing the brunt of issues for many months now, but they've finally had enough," Ms Dabars says.

"From this week, ED nurses at the RAH will be wearing purple scrubs as a visual demonstration to management, and the broader community, that they can't take much more," she says.

She says many of the issues plaguing the site have been occurring since the hospital opened its doors last September.

"Overcrowding and associated patient flow issues are affecting most Adelaide emergency departments," she says, "but it is the processes introduced at the RAH to try to combat patient demand that is causing more angst at this site."

"Our RAH members are having to treat people in the waiting room, ask personal questions within earshot of others, and start treatment in places where the patient's condition has the potential to deteriorate out of the sight line of nurses."

These issues, she adds, have been compounded with the recent introduction of nurses having to participate in the external triaging of patients.

"Nurses are now having to go from ambulance to ambulance ramped outside the hospital to triage patients—and the complexity around this practice is who, then, has governance over these patients?"

"From the back of the ambulance, patients are admitted onto EPAS (the Enterprise Patient Administration System), which effectively extends the hospital waiting room out into the ambulance."

Ms Dabars says that pain management therapy is often started out in the ambulance, with the patient then having to be left unattended while the triage nurse moves on to the next ambulance.

"The hospital isn't staffed for nurses to be triaging or caring for patients left in ambulances. It's an unsafe practice that is putting our members at risk, not to mention the health of their patients."



Nurses say they are also feeling ill due to continued exposure to the exhaust fumes from the ambulances.

“Our members have the right to work in an environment that is safe for them and safe for their patients—and they don’t believe this is currently what’s happening at the RAH,”

The decision to launch the ‘Purple for Patient Safety’ campaign follows many months of discussions between ANMF (SA Branch) and Central Adelaide Local Health Network (CALHN) during which staff and patient safety concerns have been voiced.

“Until a safe environment is provided for both patients and staff, our members will continue to wear purple, and further action may follow unless external triaging is discontinued.”

Ms Dabars says ANMF (SA Branch) is committed to working with CALHN and the other local health networks to address the other issues affecting the RAH and hospital emergency departments.

“As winter draws closer, SA Health really needs to implement a whole-of-metropolitan response to overcrowding, because I suspect the number Emergency Department presentations is set to increase even further over the next few months.”

Media interviews:

ANMF (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars AM (0402 795 686) will be available for interview at **2.30pm today outside the Royal Adelaide Hospital.**