

Tuesday, 3 February 2015

Nurses and midwives warn against immediate bed closures

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) says there is no capacity to reduce hospital bed numbers across Adelaide without other reforms being implemented first.

The State Government's *Transforming Health* paper proposes a reduction in bed numbers as a consequence of more efficient delivery of services. However, ANMF (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars says the lack of detail within the plan creates concerns that the plans for reform will not ultimately lead to change.

"This suite of proposals will simply end up on the scrap heap of failed reforms unless the State Government ensures that there is a detailed plan to deliver on the efficiencies that they are seeking to make in this strategy," Ms Dabars said.

"Today's announcements fail to provide an assurance that the plans are capable of being implemented successfully and much more detail needs to be provided to health professionals and the community at large."

"We were anticipating that today's plan would reveal details of the number of beds expected to close and where those beds would in fact be closed. Although there are very clear hints that the Repatriation Hospital will be savagely affected by the reductions in service it is not clear what, if any, services will be retained at that site."

Ms Dabars said that nurses at the Repatriation General Hospital will be devastated by the announcements that essentially force its closure.

"While we are supportive of investment in the creation of a new Centre of Excellence for the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress, there has been significant investment in other areas such as rehabilitation and mental health services at the Repat over recent years," she said.

"We do not understand how rebuilding these almost-new facilities elsewhere will lead to better or more efficient care, let alone how this proposal could justify the impact it will have on veterans, their families and staff."

"I am sure that our members working at the other sites subjected to rumours of service changes and bed closures for several months will be disappointed by the lack of detail about their futures."

The ANMF (SA Branch) has also warned that reforms to emergency care – which will see the emergency department at Noarlunga Hospital redesignated as a walk-in emergency clinic - required careful design and a clear implementation strategy.

"In a number of instances nationally and overseas, emergency services have been replaced by local health walk-in centres that offer rapid and appropriate care for minor injuries and illnesses," Ms Dabars said.

"While this allows a smaller number of emergency departments to concentrate on major traumas, any changes to our EDs will need to be tried and tested locally before a full scale reform of emergency care is implemented. Our health system simply cannot afford to go backwards."



“The ANMF welcomes a number of other aspects of the plan including moving older patients waiting for residential care into more appropriate convalescent beds, creating specialist elective surgery sites and a renewed focus on using the talents and skills of nurses. However we will oppose any cuts that compromise the safety and quality of care by reducing the ratio of nurses to patients,” Ms Dabars said.

The ANMF (SA Branch) is seeking further information on the proposal before obtaining feedback from members over the next few weeks on how the reform package can be improved.