



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 18 September 2018

NURSES CALL FOR CRISIS MEETING WITH MINISTER OVER HOSPITAL OVERCROWDING

Nursing staff at emergency departments across Adelaide have reached crisis point, having spent months battling to provide safe and effective care to patients amidst continuing bed shortages and extremely high levels of demand.

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary Adj Associate Professor Elizabeth Dabars AM says emergency department nurses, at the frontline of our public health system, are frustrated and angry about the Government's lack of action.

"For too long, we have received lip service from the government in relation to this crisis—and our members have had enough," Ms Dabars says.

"We again highlighted the need for a framework to deliver more effective and efficient services two weeks ago, in response to the significant state budget cuts to health," she says.

"Yet this budget, the Minister and the Department of Health have all failed to address this fundamental problem confronting our hospitals, our patients and our members struggling to cope with overwhelming demand at every turn."

While Ms Dabars acknowledges the Minister *has* recognised the problem and said he wants the issue resolved, she says it's now six months on from the change in government and the situation at emergency departments remains the same.

"Every day our members have to front up to work in such circumstances is a day this Government has failed to implement measures that will make them, and their patients, safe."

She says she has repeatedly told the government the overcrowding can only be addressed in one of two ways.

"The Government needs to either provide additional capacity to meet demand or find alternative ways of meeting South Australia's requirement for treatment and care—neither of these approaches has been implemented."

As a consequence, she says, nursing staff are having to treat more and more patients in emergency departments rather than transferring them to wards.

With you at work and in practice

“We are seeing recovery rooms being used as a source of additional beds to take patients from overcrowded emergency areas, and we’re now also back to seeing patients being cared for in corridors.”

She says mental health services, in particular, are creating huge issues for emergency rooms, with several patients each day waiting for beds at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and other metropolitan hospitals.

“Certainly, a lack of qualified mental health staff is compounding the shortage of beds and adding to the strain in emergency rooms.”

On behalf of its members, ANMF (SA Branch) has today called for an immediate crisis meeting to be chaired by the Minister to address the issues of hospital overcrowding, ambulance ramping and emergency room workloads.

“If the Minister fails to take responsibility for fixing this problem, there will be dire consequences for the future of emergency health care in this state.”

MEDIA INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITY:

ANMF (SA Branch) CEO/Secretary Elizabeth Dabars will be available for interview at 1pm today outside the Royal Adelaide Hospital emergency department.

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