

Blacktown Hospital dangerously understaffed

The drastic action taken by Obstetricians at Blacktown Hospital has exposed just how deep concerns around understaffing and patient safety run at the Hospital.

ASMOF NSW President Dr Tony Sara said:

'Choosing to resign from your post is not an action doctors take lightly, and it reflects their grave concerns for the safety of their patients.

Doctors are overwhelmed, unsafe and unsupported by a system that blames them when things go wrong.

It's an untenable situation. They have taken this action because they see no other avenue for change.'

ASMOF- The Doctors' Union has been advocating on behalf of trainees at Blacktown since September, when members reported that they were struggling with unreasonable workloads, with only 1 trainee doctor covering the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department on evening and night shifts, with no consultant on weekends.

ASMOF requested that locum doctors be employed as a matter of urgency to ensure patients and doctors were safe at the Hospital. Management have since confirmed that they will be sourcing more junior and senior doctors, and have committed to having two doctors on evening and nights, as well as a consultant over the weekend.

Employing locums and contracting specialist services is a necessary short-term fix to this crisis but a long-term solution is needed. The Department must develop a proper staffing model which includes enough permanent, salaried doctors to reflect increasing presentations at Blacktown.

ASMOF is aware that understaffing is not just limited to the O&G Department and is widespread at the hospital and across the Western Sydney Health District. Our members have described the staffing at Western Sydney as 'shocking'.

We will continue meeting with members in every specialty at Blacktown to ensure the hospital is adequately staffed, and will escalate our safety concerns if required. Both Blacktown and the WSLHD have committed to having regular Union Consultative meetings with ASMOF.

The NSW Government is ultimately responsible for ensuring that our public hospitals in Western Sydney are able to meet patient demand, which is driven by a high concentration of chronic disease and socio-economic disadvantage.

'We need to look at the bigger picture and Western Sydney is being short changed.' Dr Sara said.

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