

7 January 2019

Mersey Community Hospital Theatres Industrial Action Suspended – DOORSTOP TODAY

Media Doorstop: ANMF Tasmanian Branch Office, Launceston
When: 1:30pm TODAY, Monday 7th January 2018
Who: Emily Shepherd, ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary

Members of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Tasmanian Branch (ANMF) working at the Mersey Community Hospital Theatre this morning passed a unanimous decision to postpone their ban on elective surgeries as part of the public sector industrial campaign as a further sign of their goodwill to ensure patient care is not compromised.

This resolution comes after Mersey Community Hospital Theatre members were threatened by the Tasmanian Government to be stood down without pay if they did not proceed with elective surgeries. This was despite there being no Theatre Nurses available across the State to replace them and carry out the surgeries anyway.

Members passed a resolution in November to ban all elective surgeries at the Mersey Community Hospital Theatre if the Tasmanian Government did not bring to the negotiating table a competitive offer for Tasmanian public sector nurses and midwives.

“The Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian Health Service were notified of this resolution on 28 November 2018 to ensure that any patient that required urgent category 1 elective surgery could be listed at an alternate theatre across the State,” said ANMF Branch Secretary Emily Shepherd.

“As part of the industrial action, members also volunteered to assist in reducing the growing overdue wait list for endoscopies and colonoscopies in lieu of undertaking elective surgeries.”

“Despite members considerable notice period and the offer to assist in reducing the elective procedures wait list during their industrial action, the Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian Health Service have recklessly ignored both the resolution and the offer to assist. They have instead pressured ANMF members to suspend their industrial action.”

ANMF Tasmanian Branch Secretary, Emily Shepherd said today that “ironically, in the last week the Tasmanian Government has vilified ANMF members for undertaking industrial action that may have led to a small number of elective surgeries needing to be re-scheduled despite hundreds of Tasmanians being overdue for the elective surgery and hundreds more yet to make the elective surgery wait lists - some of which are the worst in the country.”

“ANMF members do not take industrial action lightly and their intention was never to impact upon patient care which is evident by the notice period given. This notice period was to allow for alternative arrangements to be made prior to action commencing.”

ANMF members firmly believe that the Tasmanian Government have forced them to undertake such drastic action. They are still waiting for a competitive offer to be tabled for their public sector enterprise agreement despite commencing negotiations in May 2018.

“The ANMF have never left the negotiating table and have proactively put solutions and ideas to the team to progress the agreement forward in a positive way. Yet, despite this an offer, which did not address key issues for members, was not tabled until late December 2018.”

“ANMF members have had enough of propping up an ailing health system that has hundreds of vacancies due to not having a competitive agreement compared to other states and territories. They are tired of dealing with over capacity public hospitals, at times in unsafe environments while also doing over 15 million dollars in overtimes and double shifts, all to ensure patients are kept safe,” said Ms Shepherd.

“In one instance Theatre Nurses worked 24 hours straight to ensure patients still received their surgery. They worked such a long shift as the speciality Theatre was unable to recruit additional staff to the area.”

“Today, ANMF members are extremely disappointed. Instead of focussing on the issues at hand, that of protecting the nursing and midwifery professions and the broader Tasmanian Health System - the Tasmanian Government have instead strategically chosen to condemn the actions of the very nurses who are keeping patients safe.”

While ANMF members at the Mersey Community Hospital Theatre have suspended their ban on elective surgery, they have done so on the proviso that the Tasmanian Government will come to the negotiating table on January 10th 2019 with an offer that recognises the goodwill and efforts of Tasmanian nurses and midwives. That they will negotiate an offer that sees sustainability of the nursing and midwifery professions for the future and allows the retention and recruitment of nurses and midwives.

“If the offer is not improved ANMF Mersey Theatre members have vowed to re-consider their suspension and the ANMF will consult with members state-wide to discuss escalation of industrial action,” said Ms Shepherd.

“End”

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