



**Deputy Premier**

**Minister for Health; Medical Research;  
State Development, Jobs and Trade; Science**

Our Ref: 60-37475

Mr Mark Olson  
Secretary Australian Nursing Federation  
Industrial Union of Workers Perth  
PO Box 824  
PERTH BUSINESS CENTRE WA 6849

Dear Mr Olson *Mark,*

Thank you for your letter of 8 April 2021 regarding consultation with nursing staff in the Emergency Department of Perth Children's Hospital (PCH) and a proposed plan to address current difficulties.

As you are aware PCH has been experiencing an unprecedented increase in presentations to the Emergency Department (ED), coinciding with high demand and occupancy across the hospital. Further to this, and despite ongoing recruitment, PCH is experiencing staffing shortages, exacerbated by the unavailability of casual staff and redistribution of staff to undertake COVID-19 related activities.

The demand and workforce pressures experienced by PCH in recent months mirror the challenges being faced by public hospitals across Australia.

The Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS) has been actively working with nursing staff on strategies to address the increased demand and nursing workforce issues. A number of proactive strategies have been employed in the Emergency Department to improve the workload for staff, many of which were triggered in response to demand toward the end of 2020.

These strategies continue to be implemented and include:

- An immediate increase in permanent nursing staff to enable two additional registered nurses rostered for the Emergency Department across all shifts, resulting in an increase of 11.1FTE.
- Increased allocation of leave provisions across the nursing establishment, enabling permanent recruitment of an additional 5FTE, bringing total overall increase to 16.1FTE.
- The increased FTE includes:
  - An additional nurse allocated to monitor patients in the Emergency Department waiting areas
  - An additional nurse allocated to work across the Emergency Department, supporting areas with higher levels of activity

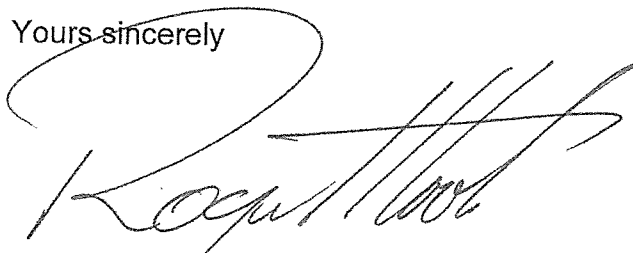
- Introduction of rapid nurse recruitment and additional support for on-boarding across PCH, along with enhanced graduate nursing capacity to optimise permanent recruitment to the increased FTE.
- A designated ED Resuscitation Team on every shift, supported by senior medical and nursing staff from within the hospital attending every resuscitation in the Emergency Department.
- An increase to the allocation of Staff Development Nurses in the Emergency Department, effectively doubling the allocation.
- Increased CNS cover each day to provide supervision of junior nursing staff
- An administration officer has been assigned to the triage desk.
- The establishment of a Medical Short Stay Unit on 13 April to provide treatment for general paediatric patients with a Length of Stay <72hrs to support timely admission, improved outcomes, and improved emergency access.
- The expansion of the Surgical Short Stay (Ward 3C) to support an increase in theatre sessions and emergency theatre access and the activation of beds in our High Dependency Unit is being developed.

In addition to these strategies CAHS can confirm that any review of ED staffing will ensure the shift coordinator and triage nurse are not allocated a patient load. The PCH Winter and Surge Bed Management Plan has already been put in place to meet current demand and is available to staff.

I am advised that the Senior Leadership Team has, and will continue to meet and work closely with, the management and staff within the Emergency Department. I have specifically asked the Chief Executive of CAHS to engage staff in managing implementation of changes to the Emergency Department, including the creation of an Emergency Department Consultative Working Group, co-chaired by a member of the Emergency Department nursing team.

I would be happy to discuss these matters with you and the Chief Executive of CAHS and can assure you of my commitment to providing safe, high-quality health care at PCH, which remains objectively one of the safest dedicated paediatric hospitals in Australia.

Yours sincerely



**HON ROGER COOK MLA**  
DEPUTY PREMIER;  
MINISTER FOR HEALTH