

Healthscope – responses to questions taken on notice during the Budget Estimate hearing on 27 February 2025 for the portfolio of Health

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QUESTION:

The CHAIR: Why were two staff nurses cancelled for night shift on 20 February, leaving the emergency department understaffed by one nursing staff member?

GREG HORAN: I'm sorry, I couldn't answer as to why two nurses on 20 February. I'd have to take that on notice.

ANSWER:

On 20 February, two registered nurses who were rostered at Northern Beaches Hospital cancelled their own shifts. Two agency staff were hired to cover those shifts. The overall staffing profile numbers that night were one over profile for the activity in the Emergency Department.

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QUESTION:

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: How many consultants were working in the emergency department between the hours of 7.00 a.m. and 11.00 a.m. on 14 September, both paediatric and adult ED?

PETER THOMAS: I can answer that question. We have three specialists on the floor at any one time. For the morning shift, that starts at eight o'clock. Prior to that, there will be the junior medical staff and the physical presence of the ED consultants or specialists. Their shifts commence at eight o'clock, in line with other New South Wales hospitals. We would have three specialists on the floor at any one time.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: On 14 September, can you confirm—and you're sure—that there were three in place?

PETER THOMAS: I can't confirm. I can certainly take that on notice. What I am aware of is there were three specialists listed on the resuscitation record who were ED specialists, who were present in ED at the time of the resuscitation after 10.40 a.m.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: On 14 September, can you confirm—and you're sure—that there were three in place?

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Mr Thomas, can you clarify when Joe Massa was put on an IV drip? Was it after his cardiac arrest?

PETER THOMAS: I can't clarify that without confirming the notes, but I do know that he didn't have an IV cannula placed until he was in the resuscitation bay.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: You'll take that part of it on notice, if you need to?

ANSWER:

Northern Beaches Hospital has confirmed that Baby Joe Massa had an IV cannula inserted at 10:49am - after his cardiac arrest occurred at 10:47am.

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QUESTION:

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Mr Thomas, it's been reported in *The Daily Telegraph* today that a newborn baby has died at the Northern Beaches Hospital under tragic circumstances and the chief obstetrician is investigating. Can you confirm whether an emergency C-section was called?

PETER THOMAS: I'm aware of the case. Again, I'm limited to what I can say due to confidentiality, but there was an emergency caesarean section for the mother of the child who was transferred to North Shore Hospital.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: So there was?

PETER THOMAS: There was.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: How long did that mother wait for that emergency C-section?

PETER THOMAS: I'm not aware of the details of that case.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Are you able to take that one on notice?

PETER THOMAS: I'm happy to take that on notice.

ANSWER:

As corrected later in the hearing, an emergency caesarean was planned but did not proceed, as the baby was delivered by another method. This case is now under a Serious Adverse Event Review.

The Hon. WES FANG: Was all of the CCTV duplicated before the 30-day erasure?

PETER THOMAS: I'm not aware of what was—that was part of the SAER team. The lead for the SAER team, what I have seen of the clips that had baby Joe on those portions of the clips. My understanding is the rest of the CCTV footage at that time did not have that. But, again, I would need to take that on notice. I can only give reference to what I have physically seen.

ANSWER:

As policy is to automatically delete CCTV footage after 30 days, only footage of Baby Joe Massa has been retained from this time.

QUESTION:

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: I have one more follow-up question to Professor Thomas again, if I may. From the moment Joe arrived in resuscitation bay three, what staff provided Joe with care prior to the cardiac arrest at 10.47 a.m.?

PETER THOMAS: I am unable to answer that question in detail because I don't have the clinical notes in front of me. What I do know is that I looked at the resuscitation record and noted the names that were ascribed to the particular roles, which is part of how we record a resuscitation in the emergency department.

The Hon. NATALIE WARD: Will you be able to provide that information in detail to this Committee? What was the care provided and who were these staff?

PETER THOMAS: I will take that on notice and see what information I can provide to the Committee.

ANSWER:

Baby Joe Massa was taken to the resuscitation bay by a Registered Nurse at approximately 10:44am. They were then joined by an Emergency Department staff specialist. Baby Joe Massa went into cardiac arrest at 10:47am. Following this, two additional Emergency Department staff specialists attended.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I'm not sure if this is one for you or for your team, but are you able to provide us with a breakdown and an explanation of the staffing levels at ED—what positions are there and what numbers?

GREG HORAN: We can take that on notice. Probably the easiest would be to provide our ED rostering. We can provide that on notice.

ANSWER:

Northern Beaches Hospital Emergency Department has the following staffing profile:

Emergency Department Specialists – 3 on day shift, 3 on evening shift and 1 on call overnight (between midnight and 8:00am).

Emergency Department Trainees – 3 on shift 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Emergency Department Junior Medical Officers (these include a mix of senior resident medical officers, resident medical officers and interns) – 8 on day shift, 10 on evening shift and 3 on shift overnight (between midnight and 8:00am).

Nursing staff – there is 24 hour a day Nurse Unit Manager (NUM) level 1 (Clinical NUM) and a second Clinical NUM for 12 hours a day (10:00am – 10.30pm) allocated to Paediatric ED, Fast Track Service, front of house (waiting room) and Short Stay Unit. There is a triage Registered Nurse (RN) 24 hours a day and 2-3 triage RNs during periods of high activity; 2 resuscitation RNs 24 hours a day and 3 resuscitation RNs 10am – 10.30pm, a minimum of 6 RNs in Adult Acute Area; 2 RN's in Paediatrics 24 hours a day and 3 Paediatric RNs 10:00am – 10.30pm; 2 RNs in Short Stay Unit; 1 in Fast Track Service 7:00am – 10.30pm (for business-as-usual).

In addition, at various times there are other nursing staff who are on the floor Monday - Friday in clinical support and education roles. These staff can be flexed at times of high activity.

Note: these staffing profiles do not include non-clinical staff like orderlies or wardspeople.