

**INQUIRY INTO OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF
THE NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 27 July 2019

Partially
Confidential

1) Unpaid superannuation

It is my understanding that as a staff member transferring across from NSLHD, our award is to be matched by healthscope for a period of two years. A number of us noted after a few months, that healthscope had ceased to pay our superannuation. When this was queried, healthscope quoted the practice of not contributing over and above the +/- \$25000 dollar threshold. Now whilst I understand that this may be common practice, it is certainly not NSLHD practice. I would expect that healthscope should honour their contractual agreement to match our former award for the 2 year period, and then inform us in writing of any changes that may occur from that point on.

2) Prior award matching issues

There have been other deviations from our award, but as each of these has been picked up and reported to healthscope, they have been rectified in a timely manner.

3) Opening incompetencies

No one would argue that the first few months were extremely stressful for all staff, largely as a result of healthscope a) not implementing policies, procedures and staffing numbers carefully thought out and requested by senior staff from the two NSLHD hospitals YEARS in advance of the opening, and b) seemingly not employing a dedicated change management company to manage the process - including adequate orientation, practice runs, well being and debrief of staff members who had worked in a very close, collaborative and efficient environment for many years, etc etc. There are no doubt still some knock on effects which have yet to be addressed - as evidenced by the delayed GP discharge summaries in the news currently.

4) Obvious improvements

But that is old news. That was largely (and in detail) made public within the first few months, and immediately addressed by the AMA, ASMOF and other organisations in consultation with healthscope and staff members. Within the last 4-6 months, I personally have noted that Northern Beaches hospital continues to go from strength to strength. We receive transparent and open communication from the leadership regularly discussing any changes / issues and new processes, they have a dedicated wellbeing group which seeks to address staff health in a proactive manner, the DPET has been very proactive about JMO feedback, passing this on to healthscope and following up on changes, and our steadily improving KPIs speak for themselves.

5) The impact of media

The news will always latch on to the negative and the inflammatory, as sadly good news does not sell as well as bad. If I could list all of the critically unwell patients that have passed through the NBH emergency department since the opening, and tell you the true stories of incredible skill, professionalism and empathy that accompanied their care, you would be very reassured at the quality of care delivered there.

I am incredibly proud to work with such a talented, proactive and caring group of both nurses and consultants. The emergency department has very recently been formally accredited by ACEM, our professional college, who does not approve accreditation without a series of in depth interviews of all levels of staff members, and thorough on site inspections.

6) Evolving positive culture

We support each other through stressful resuscitations, and are all eager to learn from such cases afterwards. Our junior staff feel very supported. We currently have 8 junior registrars about to sit their primary college examinations next week, and for the past 6 months, have had 2 staff members who have done many many hours of unpaid work at home, in order to provide

challenging and relevant teaching and practice tests for these hardworking young doctors. This is in addition to the paid, protected, high quality teaching that our doctors receive every week. We care about our staff, and are self motivated to go the extra mile. We include nurses in all our doctor feedback, as we value their insights and input - we truly are a team.

7) My own patient experience

I was a patient there recently, and found the entire experience to be seamless, professional and supportive, from the registration process through to my theatre and recovery experience. I have taken both of my children to the ED in the last month, and once again cannot fault their care.

8) Everyone looks bad under a spotlight

I believe that at this stage of the hospital, it is running as well as any comparable size hospital. I also believe that if we put a public and journalistic spotlight on any other hospital, they would have an identical number of patient and process related issues.

9) Summary

- Could the transition and opening have been done better? Absolutely. Those were not teething issues, they were examples of appalling planning and implementation on behalf of healthscope.
- Are there issues still to be addressed? Yes, as there are in any dynamic healthcare environment. But the staff now have a voice which is heard by the exec.
- Are there still staff shortages such that we use locums? Yes - ask any emergency department in NSW about their current issues with senior recruitment.
- Are our patients safe? Yes, they are safe, they are valued, we care for them to the best of our abilities, and we learn from them. We are continually fine tuning our processes, implementing new evidence based approaches, and open to ways to improve. Who could ask for more.
- Are our staff happy? We work in a critical care environment, in a busy department. There will always be stress associated with our job. But we support each other, and we actively seek ways to improve our environment - from rosters, to well being initiatives, to how we treat each other every day.

I personally was very anxious about the change last year, spent 2 months after the opening very stressed and frustrated, have watched the staff do amazing things whilst actively campaigning for change, have slowly watched the exec respond and change their paradigm, and am now proud to work in a collaborative environment which largely values staff well being and provides excellent patient care.