

Submission
No 52

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PROVISION OF
HEALTH SERVICES IN THE SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY
GROWTH REGION**

Organisation: Health Services Union NSW ACT QLD

Date Received: 28 May 2020



Submission to the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into the current and future provision of health services in the South-West Sydney Growth Region

The Health Services Union NSW/ACT/Qld represents some 43,000 workers in both public and private health as well as ambulance paramedics and disability and aged care workers. In the hospital system we cover all levels of support staff and health professionals, as well as junior medical officers.

Within the terms of reference for this inquiry, the interests of our members centre on the issues of comparative staff allocations and workforce planning, and this submission will focus on those issues. The information we are supplying will reflect the experiences of our members who have provided information via interviews and online surveys. It is also informed by data on staffing allocations supplied to the union in May this year by NSW Health in response to an application under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act).

Underlying the principal workplace problems our members report are the connected issues of underfunding and understaffing.

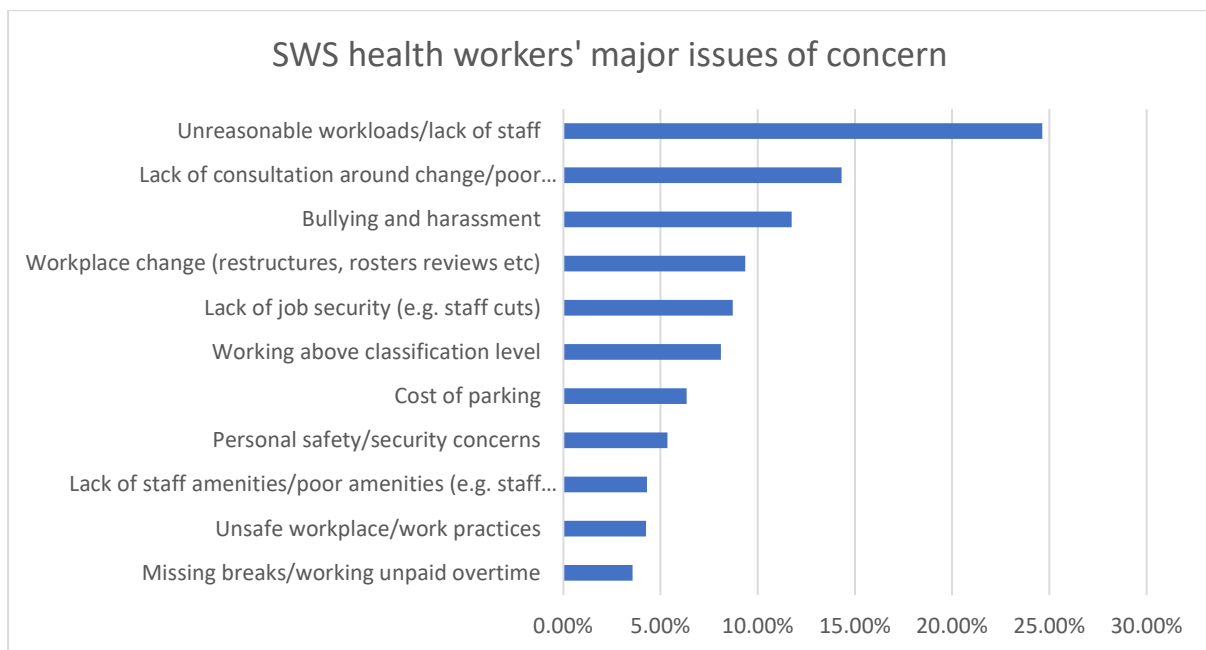


Figure 1: From HSU public health survey November 2019 to present

Members' comments to HSU officials indicate that understaffing is endemic within the district's facilities. The statements below are taken from workers at the larger facilities in order better to ensure the respondents' anonymity, but they are characteristic of workplaces in the area.

Covering for staff whilst on leave on top of my current position

Senior manager, SWSLHD

Lack of staff in ED causing long waiting times for patients

Administration worker, Liverpool Hospital

Lack of additional staff for work load and expectation of system that work will be done to standard expected

Health professional, Liverpool Hospital

Would like A/L, sick leave and ADO's covered. Casuals no longer cover leave and it's hard to get time off.

Clerical worker, Campbelltown Hospital

The lack of appropriate staffing in any area of a health facility causes knock-on effects as others scramble to fill the gap.

The consistent need to place me in other roles in the department to fill in. I have no designated role, even though I applied for front reception.

Clerical worker, Campbelltown Hospital

Increasing amount of administration for clinical staff

Senior health professional, Liverpool Hospital

Health workers also experience the effects of underfunding in insufficient or badly maintained material resources and infrastructure.

The hospital administration has just taken away our overnight room which is against my award.

Health professional, Campbelltown Hospital

Lab environment. Poor air quality... rotten garbage/sewage smell during the day.

Scientific/technical officer, Liverpool Hospital

So many empty beds not being funded when we have an ED that is full.

Overcrowding and lack of budget for appropriate equipment

Health professional, Fairfield Hospital

Staff shortages and under-resourcing are hardly unique to South West Sydney, but comparisons across the hospital system indicate that the area is already comparatively disadvantaged. Based on information provided to the HSU about the hours paid to HSU award classifications, cross-referenced with the total numbers of hospital admissions recorded by the Bureau of Health Information for 2019,

	Total Hospital Admissions 2019	HSU Covered Employees (FTE) Nov 2019	HSU Covered Employees (FTE) per 1000 hospital admissions (2019)
Western Sydney LHD	181,896	4,620.08	25.40
Nepean Blue Mountains LHD	77,297	1,884.66	24.38
Central Coast LHD	94,056	2,259.59	24.02
Sydney LHD	179,374	4,236.53	23.62
South Eastern Sydney LHD	193,564	4,136.11	21.37
Northern Sydney LHD	154,410	3,136.95	20.32
South Western Sydney LHD	245,746	4,354.20	17.72

South Western Sydney is shown to have a lower ratio of HSU covered staff (e.g. support staff, allied health) to hospital admissions than any other metropolitan local health district.

In the Bureau of Health Information's *Adult Admitted Patient Survey 2018*, on multiple indicators relating to the duties of HSU covered employees, including support staff and allied health professionals, South Western Sydney LHD was frequently the poorest performing metropolitan LHD.

	FTE HSU Covered Employees per 1000 hospital admissions (2019)	Time from arrival to ward/room was 'about right' %	Wards/room stayed in were 'very clean' %	Always 'treated with respect and dignity' %	Cultural or religious beliefs 'always' treated with respect %	Did not receive contradictory information from health professionals %	Rated health professionals 'very good' %	Definitely 'felt involved in decisions about discharge from hospital' %	Hospital staff 'completely' took into account family/home situation when planning discharge %	Well 'organised' %	Overall, would rate the care received in hospital as 'very good' %
Central Coast LHD	24.02	78	75	86	95	83	62	66	77	68	71
Nepean Blue Mountains LHD	24.38	80	65	82	91	80	58	65	73	61	64
Northern Sydney LHD	20.32	80	74	88	93	85	63	66	74	69	72
South Eastern Sydney LHD	21.37	76	66	85	94	79	60	65	75	65	65
South Western Sydney LHD	17.72	72	63	82	89	67	52	61	69	59	57
Sydney LHD	23.62	74	64	87	93	78	60	65	73	65	66
Western Sydney LHD	25.40	74	64	82	90	73	56	62	70	59	60

The two largest hospitals within the South Western Sydney growth region are Liverpool Hospital (a principal referral hospital) and Campbelltown Hospital (a group 1 major hospital). Of the 71 questions reported in the results of the *Adult Admitted Patient Survey 2018*, Liverpool Hospital performed significantly more favourably than NSW in one indicator, and significantly less favourably than NSW on three indicators. Campbelltown Hospital did not perform significantly better than NSW on any indicator, and performed significantly less favourably than NSW on two indicators. Further, Nepean Hospital, part of the Nepean Blue Mountains LHD, but nonetheless referred to by NSW Health in their submission to this inquiry as an 'existing acute facility in the region' did not perform significantly better than NSW on any indicator, and performed significantly less favourably than NSW on ten indicators.

Of all hospitals consistently recording greater than 10,000 admissions per quarter in 2018-19, Campbelltown Hospital recorded the second highest growth in admissions over the five years from 2014-15 to 2018-19, with a 32.97% increase in hospital admissions. Over the same period, Liverpool Hospital saw an increase in admissions of 11.98%.

	No. Hospital Admissions		
	FY 2014-15	FY 2018-19	% Growth
Blacktown	33,468	45,733	36.65%
Campbelltown	44,768	59,527	32.97%
RNS	68,844	82,083	19.23%
Concord	55,232	62,471	13.11%
Liverpool	80,996	90,701	11.98%
POW	46,216	49,868	7.90%
Nepean	61,840	66,299	7.21%
St George	62,069	66,375	6.94%
Wollongong	52,708	54,350	3.12%
RPA	81,425	83,391	2.41%
Westmead	103,895	103,819	-0.07%
John Hunter	80,409	80,106	-0.38%
St Vincent's	44,908	44,646	-0.58%
Bankstown	49,633	48,618	-2.05%
Gosford	57,096	55,713	-2.42%

The struggle to cope with excessive workloads and lack of infrastructure support inevitably produces a workforce with low morale and a lack of trust in the local administration. Considering the shortfalls they struggle with daily, HSU members are pessimistic when comes to planning for the future demands on the area's health facilities.

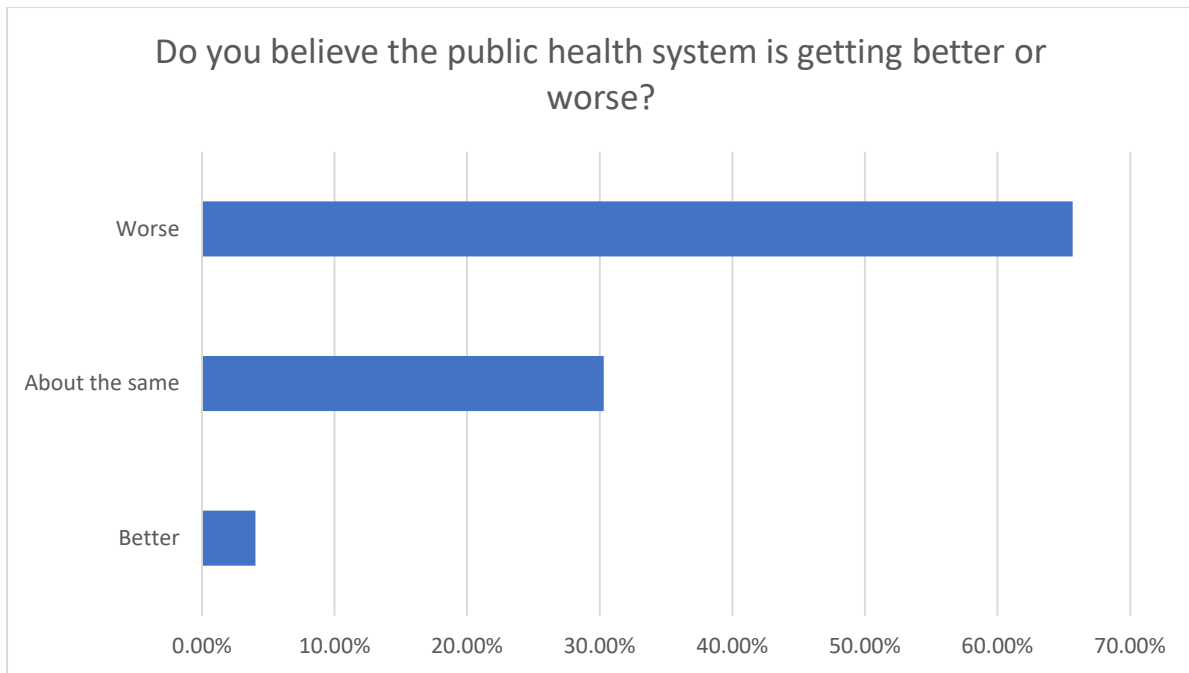


Figure 2: From HSU public health survey November 2019 to present

No loyalty to long term staff

Ward orderly, Liverpool Hospital

Poor morale in workplace

Administration worker, Liverpool Hospital

Lack of support for my professional development...lack of a performance review or plan, unfair and opaque recruitment practices

Health professional, Liverpool Hospital

Managers with no clinical background making decisions that affect clinical practice

Dental officer, Liverpool Hospital

Safety, morale, security equipment, level of staff and support from Hospital management are at an all-time low.

Security officer/HASA, Campbelltown Hospital

Lack of professional respect and support/blame mentality when there is an adverse event

Health professional, Campbelltown Community Health

These deficiencies of staffing, facilities and resources demand urgent remedial action. Until it ensures that the area's health administrators have addressed them, until the current establishment is fully functional, NSW Health cannot be in a position to assess the emerging needs of the South Western Sydney Growth Region.