



Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (SCHN)

virtualKIDS

Consultation Document

May 2026



Table of Contents

Background3
Case for Proposed Changes3
Current Status4
Current Structure5
Proposed Structure6
Affected positions including current incumbents.....8
Key features of the proposal:.....8
Impact on Employment Arrangements..... 10
Timetable for the Changes to Organisational Structure 10
Employee Assistance program..... 10
Feedback and Contact Details..... 10
Conclusion..... 11
Appendix A – Staff Survey 12



Background

virtualKIDS is a paediatric virtual healthcare service developed to improve access to safe, timely and appropriate care for children and young people. Since its launch in June 2021, virtualKIDS has expanded to a statewide service across NSW, supporting thousands of children and their families with the aim to reduce ED presentations, improve access to care, enhance continuity of care and collaboration with local health services. virtualKIDS is a 24/7 service run by specialised paediatric-trained Clinical Nurse Consultants, Registered Nurses, and Administrative Officers with the support of Paediatricians.

While virtualKIDS has been highly successful in improving access to paediatric care and reducing the burden on emergency departments, the service continues to face challenges. These include managing increasing service demands, ensuring staff resourcing for 24/7 coverage, and securing ongoing permanent funding to support service delivery. virtualKIDS currently receives block funding on a yearly basis, resulting in some positions being managed on a temporary basis. An Economics and Evaluation Unit virtualKIDS Urgent Care Early Impact assessment has been carried out, and it's anticipated this may enable permanent funding soon.

Case for Proposed Changes

To support and align with the allocated statewide budget, this proposal recommends transitioning from the current 8-hour and 12-hour nursing and administrative officer shifts to a 10-hour shift model within SCHN virtualKIDS. The change is designed to improve workforce wellbeing, enhance staffing coverage, improve capacity to accept referrals and align with allocated funding.

Whilst one of the drivers for the proposed change is budget alignment, the management team within virtualKIDS has also received written requests from both administrative officers and registered nurses expressing their preference for transitioning to a 10-hour shift model.

Evidence indicates that while longer shifts can increase the risk of fatigue, they may also improve staff satisfaction by providing more consecutive days off and reducing the number of weekly shifts required. Identified risks will be managed through strict adherence to mandated breaks, ongoing monitoring, and active consultation with staff.

A three-month pilot trial period of the 10-hour shift model is proposed to evaluate its effectiveness and impact before implementation.



Summary of whole of service FTE profile- Current verses Proposed

Total FTE - Staffing Profile	Pre-proposal	Post proposal
	FY25	FY26
Clinical Nurse Consultant	7.76	6.47
Registered Nurse	10.35	10.78
Administrative Officer	5.89	4.14
	24.00	21.39

Current Status

Within virtualKIDS the following shift patterns exist:

- Administrative Officers 8 hr shifts- AM 07.30-1600 and PM 14:00- 22.30.
- Registered Nurses 8-hour shifts- AM 08-1630 and PM 14-2230.
- Clinical Nurse Consultants rotating 12hr shifts- A-7-1930, Mid- 10-2230, and N- 1900-0730.

Challenges include:

Some staff have reported feeling stretched and that shifts can feel draining at times.

- Inadequate staffing coverage on some shifts due to limited overlap between shift lengths.
- Baseline expenses for CNCs exceeding allocated budget, reducing ability to recruit into RN vacancies.
- Increased reliance on overtime to cover unexpected leave and staffing shortfalls.



Current Structure

Pre-proposal CNC Nursing Profile- (Current)

CNC						
Direct Care Nurses - Productive FTE						
	Headcount per Shift Excluding NUM, CNE, CNC					
	Morning		Afternoon		Night Duty	
Duration of Shift in Hours		12		12		12
Monday		1		1		1
Tuesday		1		1		1
Wednesday		1		1		1
Thursday		1		1		1
Friday		1		1		1
Saturday		1		1		1
Sunday		1		1		1
Leave Relief for Direct Care Nurses					Sub Total FTE	6.63
	Weeks	FTE	Sub Total FTE			
Sick/ FACS/ Mandatory Ed.	2.0	0.27				
Annual Leave	6.0	0.86	1.13		Total FTE	7.76

Pre-proposal RN Nursing Profile- (Current)

RN						
Direct Care Nurses - Productive FTE						
	Headcount per Shift Excluding NUM, CNE, CNC					
	Morning		Afternoon		Night Duty	
Duration of Shift in Hours	8	12	8	12	8	10
Monday	3		3			
Tuesday	3		3			
Wednesday	3		3			
Thursday	3		3			
Friday	3		3			
Saturday	3		3			
Sunday	3		3			
Leave Relief for Direct Care Nurse					Sub Total FTE	8.84
	Weeks	FTE	Sub Total FTE			
Sick/ FACS/ Mandat	2.0	0.35				
Annual Leave	6.0	1.15	1.51		Total FTE	10.35



Pre-proposal Admin Profile- (Current)

Admin

Direct Care Nurses - Productive FTE						
	Headcount per Shift Excluding NUM, CNE, CNC					
	Morning		Afternoon		Night Duty	
Duration of Shift in Hours	8	12	8	12	8	10
Monday	2		2			
Tuesday	2		2			
Wednesday	2		2			
Thursday	2		2			
Friday	2		2			
Saturday	2		2			
Sunday	2		2			
Leave Relief for Direct Care Nurses					Sub Total FTE	5.89
	Weeks	FTE	Sub Total FTE			
Sick/ FACS/ Mandatory Ed.	0.0	0.00				
Annual Leave	0.0	0.00	0.00		Total FTE	5.89

Proposed Structure

Proposed CNC Nursing Profile

CNC

Direct Care Nurses - Productive FTE						
	Headcount per Shift Excluding NUM, CNE, CNC					
	Morning		Afternoon		Night Duty	
Duration of Shift in Hours		10		10		10
Monday		1		1		1
Tuesday		1		1		1
Wednesday		1		1		1
Thursday		1		1		1
Friday		1		1		1
Saturday		1		1		1
Sunday		1		1		1
Leave Relief for Direct Care Nurses					Sub Total FTE	5.53
	Weeks	FTE	Sub Total FTE			
Sick/ FACS/ Mandatory Ed.	2.0	0.22				
Annual Leave	6.0	0.72	0.94		Total FTE	6.47



Proposed RN Nursing Profile

RN						
Direct Care Nurses - Productive FTE						
	Headcount per Shift Excluding NUM, CNE, CNC					
	Morning		Afternoon		Night Duty	
Duration of Shift in Hours		10		10		10
Monday		2		3		
Tuesday		2		3		
Wednesday		2		3		
Thursday		2		3		
Friday		2		3		
Saturday		2		3		
Sunday		2		3		
Leave Relief for Direct Care Nurses						
	Weeks	FTE	Sub Total FTE			Sub Total FTE
Sick/ FACS/ Mandatory Ed.	2.0	0.37				
Annual Leave	6.0	1.20	1.57			Total FTE
						10.78

Proposed Admin Profile

Admin						
Direct Care Nurses - Productive FTE						
	Headcount per Shift Excluding NUM, CNE, CNC					
	Morning		Afternoon		Night Duty	
Duration of Shift in Hours	10	12	10	12	12	10
Monday	1		1			
Tuesday	1		1			
Wednesday	1		1			
Thursday	1		1			
Friday	1		1			
Saturday	1		1			
Sunday	1		1			
Leave Relief for Direct Care Nurs						
	Weeks	FTE	Sub Total FTE			Sub Total FTE
Sick/ FACS/ Mand	2.0	0.15				
Annual Leave	4.0	0.31	0.45			Total FTE-
						4.14



Affected positions including current incumbents.

The proposed shift changes will apply to all nursing and administrative staff within the virtualKIDS service, transitioning from the current mix of 8-hour and 12-hour shifts to a 10-hour shift model.

Minor adjustments may be required for part-time staff to align with the 10-hour structure. For example, a 0.63 FTE arrangement currently equating to 24 hours per week may adjust to either 20 or 25 hours per week. Any such adjustments, and any impacts arising during the pilot, will be managed through individual and ongoing consultation.

A minor reduction in Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC) FTE will be managed organically through ongoing review of funding allocation, temporary contracts, and secondment arrangements.

Shift structure options have been developed as part of the pilot, with individual consultation to inform preferred start and finish times, balancing operational requirements with staff needs where reasonably practicable.

Our proposed shift structure options. (Consultation with staff member to inform preferable start/finish time to be completed)

CNC		
AM Shift	07:00- 1730	07.30-18.00
PM Shift	12.00-2230	12.30-23.00
Night shift	21.30-07.30	22.00-08.00

Registered Nurses		
AM Shift	08:00-1830	
PM Shift	12.30-23:00	12-2230

Admin		
AM	07.30- 18.00	
PM	12.30-23.00	12-2230

Key features of the proposal:

- Standardised 10-hour shifts for all nursing and administrative staff within virtualKIDS.
- Four shifts per week (approx. 40 hours), allowing additional days off over duration of roster period.
- Rosters developed to ensure equitable distribution of AM, PM, weekends and night shifts.
- Shift overlap windows increased to allow for improved handover and continuity of care.



- Able to adequately staff within allocated virtualKIDS budget 25/26 budget.
- Proposal now provides for leave relief for Administrative Officers which was excluded from original profile.



Impact on Employment Arrangements

Anticipated Impact of Proposed Shift Length Changes

- Breaks and Rostering: Proposed shift structure includes two paid 15-minute breaks and one 30-minute unpaid break per 10-hour shift.
- Contracted Hours: Minor adjustments may be required for part-time staff to align with 10-hour shifts. (e.g. a 0.63 FTE equating to 24 hours per week would adjust to either 25 or 20 hours per week).
- Recruitment: The change is expected to improve the ability and timeliness to recruit into vacant Registered Nurse positions.
- Pilot Program: A 3-month pilot is proposed in virtualKIDS before broader rollout, with regular feedback sessions and evaluation checkpoint

Timetable for the Changes to Organisational Structure

Stage		Timescale
1	Consultations with staff and Notifications to Unions (to occur simultaneously)	Upon approval of brief
2	Work with staff who may be affected re options/ Staff Survey/ focus groups.	With Stage 1
3	Consultation Close	2 weeks following commencement of Stage 1
4	Assessment of staff and union comments	One week following end of Stage 3
5	Continue to work with staff affected by changes	Throughout 3 month pilot period

Employee Assistance program

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free strictly confidential and professional counselling service provided by the Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network to all staff. Staff can access the program via **TELUS Health** on **1800 454 713**.

Feedback and Contact Details

Enquiries and feedback regarding the proposed structure should be addressed to:

Sean Pay
Acting Nurse Unit Manager – VirtualKIDS - SCHN
Sandra Pengilly



Clinical Stream Director- Connected Care- SCHN

Conclusion

This proposal presents an opportunity to strengthen both patient care delivery and staff experience while ensuring alignment with the statewide budget. We are committed to working closely with the unions and our stakeholders to implement changes that are equitable, transparent, and supportive to our nursing and administrative workforce.

Collaboration through the pilot and evaluation phases will ensure a constructive and considered approach to this shift transition.



Appendix A – Staff Survey

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey.

Section 1: Current Shift Experience

1. Which of the following shifts do you currently work? (Select all that apply)
 - 12-hour shifts
 - 8-hour shifts
 2. How satisfied are you with your current shift length?
 - Very satisfied
 - Satisfied
 - Neutral
 - Dissatisfied
 - Very dissatisfied
 3. What do you like most about your current shift schedule?
Open-ended response
 4. What do you dislike about your current shift schedule?
Open-ended response
-

Section 2: Proposed 10-Hour Shift

5. How do you feel about switching to 10-hour shifts?
 - Strongly support
 - Support
 - Neutral
 - Oppose
 - Strongly oppose
6. Which potential benefits of 10-hour shifts appeal to you? (Select all that apply)
 - Better work-life balance
 - More days off per week
 - Reduced commute days
 - Less fatigue compared to 12-hour shifts
 - Other (please specify): _____
7. What concerns do you have about 10-hour shifts? (Select all that apply)
 - Longer workdays leading to fatigue
 - Impact on family or personal life
 - Difficulty in childcare or other responsibilities
 - Impact on patient care continuity



- Other (please specify): _____

Section 3: Impact and Preferences

8. How do you think the change to 10-hour shifts will affect your:

a) Work performance?

- Improve significantly
- Improve somewhat
- No change
- Worsen somewhat
- Worsen significantly

b) Job satisfaction?

- Improve significantly
- Improve somewhat
- No change
- Worsen somewhat
- Worsen significantly

c) Work-life balance?

- Improve significantly
- Improve somewhat
- No change
- Worsen somewhat
- Worsen significantly

9. Any additional comments or suggestions about shift length or scheduling?

Open-ended response