



15th May 2023

Mr. Michael Kearns
Organiser, Public Health Division
Health Services Union
NSW/ACT/QLD

Dear Michael

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with a formal response to your concerns regarding the safety and security of staff in Community and Allied Health (allied health and administration) being requested to wear a uniform. I would like to acknowledge the concerns of your members and I have consulted with Steve Klaassen, Manager, Workforce in the development of this response.

The mandate for all allied health staff to wear a uniform is a direction of the Northern NSW Local Health District (NNSWLHD) and has previously been consulted with the Health Services Union. Allied health staff who work in areas such as counselling, child protection and sexual assault services are not required to wear a uniform. As part of the districts uniform policy allied health professionals are paid a laundry allowance as part of the requirement to wear a uniform.

As part of moving to the new structure of Community and Allied Health it is our intent that our staff are corporate and professional in their appearance and having staff in a uniform is a component of this. Uniforms in a large organisation like NNSWLHD ensures that staff, patients and families are able to easily differentiate who are legitimate health staff on any district site or in the community.

Many healthcare professionals are required to wear uniforms and there is no evidence to support that wearing a uniform hinders a health professionals' ability to engage with clients. I would like to suggest that the ability to engage with clients is about a clinicians communication and empathy skills. If there are specific circumstances where a clinician needs to engage a vulnerable client and the wearing of a uniform may impede that engagement then the clinician should discuss with and seek approval of their line manager. This would be on a needs basis. For those healthcare professionals working with aged care populations such as Aged Care Assessment, Transitional Aged Care and Regional Assessment and many of the other service providers going into a clients home also wear uniforms. In addition, the majority of these clients do not have challenging behaviours.

In 2024 the majority of organisations involved in the care economy have their staff mandated to wear uniforms. This is for a number of reasons including increasing the accountability of professionals, which in turn increases client safety as well as providing a professional service to clients by ensuring that professionals are wearing appropriate clothing and footwear. It is unclear from your letter what specific work health and safety risk exist for staff if required to wear a uniform and I am unsure how wearing a uniform has the potential to present a work health and safety issue for staff. To date, community and allied health have not had any reported issues relating to this issue.

In relation to your members concerns regarding nursing staff in community health not being in uniform I would like to assure you that we are currently working with the district regarding mandating uniforms for nursing staff.

I trust that this addresses your concerns. Please contact me on 0429303701 or lisa.beasley@health.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Beasley



General Manager
Community and Allied Health

