

CONSULTATION: A REVIEW OF THE CURRENT ROSTER PATIENT ENQUIRIES/ RECEPTION TEAM

1. PURPOSE

This paper outlines the proposed actions following workforce consultation, feedback from staff of the Patient Enquiries team, key stakeholders and HSU representatives in relation to the current rostering practices in consideration of the day to day requirements of the service.

The proposed change to current rostering practice has been approached in line with CCLHD's commitment to staff and their welfare, and in consultation with Workforce Business Partners.

2. BACKGROUND

Prior to the redevelopment of Gosford Hospital, Patient Enquiries were rostered to the main Reception desk in an established roster pattern of: a staggered commencement from 0700 and staggered shift finish, and one (1) staff member from 1530 to 2100, daily.

With the relocation of the Reception area to a temporary location in J4, industrial action driven by the HSU, commenced in November 2018 as staff expressed concerns for their safety. Both the temporary and permanent I4 Reception desk locations were designed to allow for a more open and customer-centric environment and therefore no longer included a glass partition between staff and customer.

In response to consultation with staff and to alleviate their immediate concerns, the District agreed to a HSU request to roster two (2) staff members across the full span of operational hours on an interim basis. It was envisaged that this would allow the staff members to settle into their permanent location in I4, assess pedestrian flow and any unforeseen safety risks.

Additional infrastructure was installed to support the staff working at reception, including additional CCTV cameras and monitors. Bespoke training was provided to the team with a focus on de-escalation techniques and recognising behavioural triggers.

Over the past months, after-hours support for all administrative staff has been enhanced with the introduction of Patient Services Supervisors. This team are available to assist administrative staff with consumer complaints, resolving conflict with patients and visitors, liaison with the After-Hours Nurse Manager and covering staff meal breaks during peak periods if necessary.

The Patient Services Supervisors have also assumed responsibility for the management of returning patient valuables after hours. Following concerns raised by

the Patient Enquiries staff members, a review of the proposed methodology in patient valuables handling was conducted. In consultation with the Director of Nursing and Revenue Manager, a solution was designed that met the needs of the Patient Enquires team and maintained a suitable level of service for the site's patient's and visitors.

With the opening of the I4 main foyer, day surgical centre admissions have relocated permanently, creating a change in pedestrian flow and queries from 0600 Monday – Friday. In coming months, the Wyong Hospital redevelopment will see improvements in communications technology that in time, may allow for more efficient processes for incoming call management.

Given the Patient Enquiries team have occupied their permanent I4 Reception location since March 2019 and the redevelopment of Gosford Hospital is now concluded, it is timely that a review of the resourcing requirements be completed.

Staff were advised that a full consultative review of the Patient Enquiries roster would be undertaken in the future, to consider a customer-centric approach to service as well as staff welfare and needs.

3. REVIEW

A benchmarking review of Patient Enquiries operations was conducted across a number of comparative LHD's including Belmont, Nepean, Wollongong, North Shore, John Hunter, Ryde, Royal Prince Alfred, and St Vincent's Public Hospitals. A summary of the key findings is as below:

- The range of tasks and duties for Patient Enquiries/Reception staff are similar across all LHD's, such as wayfinding, cash handling, patient valuables, telephone enquiries and validating parking tickets. In some LHD's the Reception team also manage fleet cars, AV equipment loan and some admissions tasks.
- The Award level for this position is consistent, at a Telephonist Administration Officer Level 2.
- The operating hours for the Gosford Hospital Reception Desk is also consistent with most opening between 06:30 – 20:00 daily. Belmont, Nepean and Ryde Hospitals are the only facilities that operate beyond 20:00. The standard (pre-COVID) operating hours for Gosford Hospital are 07:00 – 21:00 Monday – Friday with reduced hours on weekends.,
- In all LHD's the Patient Enquiries staff members work alone on shift from approximately 15:30 until close. Gosford Hospital is the only facility that is currently rostering two (2) staff members until close.

In conjunction with the Workforce WHS team a review of the rostering practices and physical environment of the Reception was completed in consultation with staff members of the Patient Enquiries team, in late August. The report summary noted:

- Improvements in the acoustics would improve communication between staff and visitors.
- Improvements in wayfinding signage and/or the installation of a wayfinding kiosk would reduce visitor frustration.
- The WHS Consultant did not identify any *significant safety concerns in staff working alone until close, but acknowledged there was a strong feeling amongst some staff that they would feel vulnerable and unsafe. If a decision is made to reduce evening staffing levels, arrangements for support for meal breaks, the management of workload and support for the psychological wellbeing of staff all need to be considered.*
- Additionally a number of risk control recommendations to improve the location of the fixed duress button, visibility of the CCTV monitor and noise attenuation measures were made.

In February 2020, an anonymous survey seeking feedback on potential changes to the rostering practices was circulated to Patient Enquiries employees and some 150+ key stakeholders, seeking feedback on the following three (3) questions:

1. Surgical Admissions at Gosford Hospital begin from 06:00 weekdays. Patients frequently seek direction and advice upon arriving for their appointment. What do you consider to be the best time/s to provide this service to patients through the patient Enquiries Reception Desk?
2. Our experience in Patient Services has shown that the high volume of patients and customers seeking direction and advice from the Patient Enquiries Reception Desk significantly drops from 20:00. Considering this, would a change in operational hours impact on service provision?
3. Currently the opening and closing hours for the Patient Enquiries Reception Desk across weekdays, weekend days and public holidays are similar. What change in hours, if any, do you think may be beneficial for patients and their families?

Patient Services received 20 responses to the survey, a mix of Patient Enquiries team members and stakeholders. In summary, the survey responses:

- Supported an earlier start time to improve the level of service provided to patients attending prior to 07:00.

- Most respondents were supportive of the Reception hours matching the Hospital's visiting hours, although many commented that activity is extremely low between 20:00 – 21:00.
- Raised ongoing challenges with the transfer of calls to Wyong Hospital. The current technology does not provide for patient bedside call transfers at Wyong, however this will be improved as the redevelopment of Wyong Hospital continues.
- Generally supported the need for two (2) staff members to be rostered up to approximately 18:30 Monday – Friday to manage the incoming call load.
- A number of respondents indicated their preference for no change to the current operating hours for the Reception.

A number of rostering options have been developed with a view to improve/maintain the service delivery to patients and visitors; address the suggestions regarding patients arriving before 07:00 for day surgery; and bring the current FTE costs in salaries & wages into line with the established FTE budget.

The pre-redevelopment/industrial action roster (below) comprised 4.32FTE, 147hrs/week.

Pre-Redevelopment	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	P/H
Morning Shift*								
Shift start	7.00am	7.00am	7.00am	7.00am	7.00am	7.30am	7.30am	7.30am
Shift finish	3.30pm	3.30pm	3.30pm	3.30pm	3.30pm	4.00pm	4.00pm	4.00pm
FTE	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Afternoon Shift								
Shift start	3.30pm	3.30pm	3.30pm	3.30pm	3.30pm	4.00pm	4.00pm	4.00pm
Shift finish**	9.00pm	9.00pm	9.00pm	9.00pm	9.00pm	9.00pm	9.00pm	9.00pm
FTE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Option 1: Current Roster

The current roster, developed as an interim measure to allow for a relocation and settling-in period comprises 5.34FTE, 182hrs/week.

Current Roster	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	P/H
Morning Shift*								
Shift start	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	07.00am	07.00am	07.00am
Shift finish	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.30pm	3.30pm	3.30pm
FTE	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Afternoon Shift								
Shift start	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm
Shift finish**	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm
FTE	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

This roster includes two (2) staff members rostered until close; a slightly earlier start to accommodate day surgical patient admission and an earlier closing time in line with the current COVID visiting hours.

A budget enhancement will be required to continue this roster pattern.

Option 2: Shift start/finish time adjustment

This roster pattern comprises 4.32FTE, 147hrs/week.

Option 2	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	P/H
Morning Shift*								
Shift start	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	07.00am	07.00am	07.00am
Shift finish	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.30pm	3.30pm	3.30pm
FTE	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Afternoon Shift								
Shift start	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm
Shift finish**	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm
FTE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

This roster pattern includes a slight change to the start/finish times; can be applied to both a 20:00 or 21:00 finish time; does not address the workload concerns until 18:30 Monday – Friday or staff concerns regarding working alone from 15:00; and is in line with established FTE budget.

Option 3: Staggered Start with 20:00 Close

This roster pattern comprises 4.32FTE, 147hrs/week.

Option 3	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	P/H
Morning Shift 1*								
Shift start	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	07.00am	07.00am	07.00am
Shift finish	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.30pm	3.30pm	3.30pm
FTE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Morning Shift 2*								
Shift start	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am
Shift finish	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm
FTE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Afternoon Shift								
Shift start	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm
Shift finish**	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm	8.00pm
FTE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

This roster pattern includes an earlier start to accommodate day surgical patient admission; an increase in staffing numbers during the peak period and up to 18:00 Monday – Friday; and an earlier closing time in line with the current COVID visiting hours. The roster will require the Switchboard to assist Reception with managing Patient Enquiries incoming call queue in the morning period and between 16:00 – 20:00 which is considered Switchboard’s capacity to do.

Option 3 best addresses staff concerns regarding working alone in the evenings for an extended period; meets the service standards required to manage peak visitation and call periods; and is in line with established FTE budget.

Option 4: Staggered Start with 21:00 Close

This roster pattern comprises 4.41FTE, 150hrs/week

Option 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	P/H
Morning Shift 1*								
Shift start	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	6.30am	07.00am	07.00am	07.00am
Shift finish	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.30pm	3.30pm	3.30pm
FTE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Morning Shift 2*								
Shift start	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am	09.30am
Shift finish	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm	6.00pm
FTE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Afternoon Shift								
Shift start	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm	3.00pm
Shift finish**	9:00pm	9:00pm	9:00pm	9:00pm	9:00pm	9:00pm	9:00pm	9:00pm
FTE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

This roster pattern is a variation of Option 3 but accommodates the Hospital's pre-COVID visiting hours of 07:00 – 21:00 daily. It requires a staff member to work alone from 18:00 – 21:00 but does provide additional support for peak visiting periods.

Should the Hospital return to standard visiting hours at some point into the future, and wish to have Reception operational across the full span of visiting hours, a small budget enhancement of \$0.09FTE will be required to accommodate a staggered start roster.

Based on the supporting review, survey responses and developed roster patterns, it is recommended that the Patient Enquiries Reception transition to a staggered shift roster pattern as per Option 3. This transition will require a minimum four (4) weeks' notification to the Patient Enquiries team members, with a proposed implementation as of Monday 4 January 2021.

4. CHANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND TIME FRAMES

The initial consultation with staff commenced in January but suspended due to Covid. This work included the following steps

Phase 1 Consultation			
Individual meetings all staff	1:1 meeting outlined the state pre Covid the potential for change. Consultation was planned to	Anne Hickey, Manager Patient Enquiries and Switchboard	January 2020 to February 2020

Team Meeting	continue through the process.		
	Team meeting to reiterate process and provide opportunity for feedback	Anne Hickey, Manager Patient Enquiries and Switchboard	January 2020
Staff Survey	Provide staff ability to answer selected questions and provide feedback on current practice and opportunity for improvement	Anne Hickey, Manager Patient Enquiries and Switchboard	Week 2 February 2020
HSU & Staff	Consultation	All actions suspended	

Phase two of the consultation includes, the following timeline and proposed actions:

Phase 2 Consultation			
	Team meeting to advise outcome of review, presentation of Option 3 roster pattern & expected implementation date (04.01.21).	Anne Hickey, Manager Patient Enquiries and Switchboard	11 – 17 Nov 20
	Advice provided to HSU	Priscilla Jones, Clinical Support Services Manager	
	1:1 roundings with Patient Enquiries staff members	Anne Hickey, Manager Patient Enquiries and Switchboard	
Team Meeting	Team meeting to advise outcome of phase 2 consultation	Anne Hickey, Manager Patient Enquiries and Switchboard	Week beginning 7 December

Proposed Change Implementation	Patient Enquires staff members advised in writing of change in roster with provision of 4 weeks' notice. Comms to stakeholders where required Roster from 11.01.21 published	Anne Hickey, Manager Patient Enquiries and Switchboard	December 20
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Included in the Implementation Plan will be information and advice to the Patient Enquiries team members regarding actions to address the WHS recommendations and survey feedback.