

## **Health and safety matters at North Coast Primary Health Network**

Dear Member,

As most members will be aware, late last year HSU members raised several health and safety issues about the Lismore and Ballina offices. Members raised specific issues and proposed possible solutions. Unfortunately, the initial response was disappointing to say the least. Members felt the issues raised were serious, but for them to be dismissed left them feeling undervalued and ignored. Their written proposal contained everything from local ABS crime statistics to realistic solutions. To members' credit, they voted unanimously to continue to push forward, and to send a frank and honest assessment of management's response. Following this, members received a far more positive response. The HSU is led to believe work is under way to resolve the Lismore office safety issues – specifically surveillance, adequate lighting, and automating the gate.

### **Ballina and Lismore office safety inspections**

Members met in mid-November to raise further issues in the Ballina and Lismore offices, particularly with regard to air quality. It was decided that the HSU would request documents from NCPHN through the WHS Act to assess workplace risk. It soon became apparent that there had been a history of mould in both workplaces.

Your local HSU official also met with senior management regarding the outcome to inspections and to propose a way forward. The Lismore elevator well appeared to be under control, and management have given a commitment to monitor this situation into the future. The Ballina office, meanwhile, appears to have had some building issues. Management have agreed to perform more air tests in the Ballina office. Thanks to action from members, it appears the issues raised are now being addressed – a great outcome for all stakeholders.

### **Where to from here**

Members should be congratulated for getting organised and unionising their workplaces throughout NCPHN. It's safe to say members have achieved a lot of success in a short period of time. But it's not time to stop yet.

Some current HSRs and members have been in contact with your local organiser in regard to establishing new workgroups and HSRs, which is fortuitous as management are of the same mind.

Your local HSU organiser will be visiting NCPHN offices over the next week or so to consult with members about what they consider would be a workgroup under the health and safety act. Your organiser will have information from SafeWork around the role and the process.

A strong member-focused HSR network, with the ability to write provisional infringement notices (PINs) when issues are identified, is a great way to empower members to take control of safety in their workplace. Countless workplaces across NSW function well with the HSR role working constructively with workers and management. Members should discuss the role prior to local officials visiting.

This is another example of your union working constructively with management to resolve issues. Remember: you are the union! You raised these issues collectively. You continued to push for a collective resolution, and collectively you achieved this outcome.

If you know someone that is not already a member, discuss recent achievements and encourage them to support the union that supports them. Through stronger and more active membership you can achieve more into the future. Non-members can join online at [www.hsu.asn.au](http://www.hsu.asn.au), call the union on 1300 478 679, or join when your local organiser visits this week.

In unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerard Hayes', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Gerard Hayes  
Secretary, HSU NSW/ACT/QLD