

SLHD Community Mental Health: Vacant positions and staff shortages

Dear Member,

SLHD HSU community mental health clinicians have contacted the HSU to raise concerns about the pressure of increasing care loads on workers, and the potential risks these pose to users of community mental health services.

NSW Health Services have been told by the NSW Government that they need to find savings of \$252 million this financial year. \$150 million of this is expected to be saved by Local Health Districts.

NSW Health Minister Mr Brad Hazzard said, "There is a recognition that there is a level of variability in the efficiencies of services offered in various parts of the state, and an expectation that all areas of NSW Health will ensure system efficiencies that work for all patients." A spokesman for Mr Hazzard said, "It's not actually saying you need to find costs. It's about performance." (SMH, 22 October 2019)

There are no more savings to be made. The system is struggling to cope. Workers are under huge pressure to deliver services without adequate staffing levels. What does that mean for you and the members of the community in which you work, when SLHD health workers are already under so much pressure to continue delivering premium services, when maximum efficiencies have already been achieved, and performance is already front of mind every day and endlessly scrutinised? How can you continue to deliver appropriate levels of service when demand is increasing, staffing levels are inadequate and vacancies persist?

Your LHD saves money when extended leave is not backfilled and vacancies aren't filled. It then expects that you work even harder, using terms such as "work smarter, work more efficiently." We think you are already smart and efficient! What about your wellbeing? What about your clients? What level and kind of support are you offered? Do you receive appropriate guidance on prioritising your work? Do you receive regular and constructive clinical supervision? Is your performance praised or questioned?

The HSU wants to learn from you and your colleagues about how this ongoing climate of cuts to health expenditure is affecting you and your work. It is conducting a survey to find out about your experience of and recommendations about care loads and supervision, so that it may represent your needs and recommendations to SLHD community mental health management.

The survey can be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SLHD-Community-Mental-Health>.

Please share it with colleagues and complete the survey by Friday 22 November 2019.

Do you know someone who isn't yet a member of the union, and should be? Share the survey with them and encourage them to join at www.hsu.asn.au/join or by calling 1300 478 679. Support the union that supports you!

In unity,

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

Gerard Hayes
Secretary, HSU NSW/ACT/QLD