

NSLHD Oral Health Service: Changes to 9 Day Fortnight Arrangement

Dear Member,

Attached is correspondence the HSU has received from Northern Sydney Local Health District regarding changes to the 9-day fortnight arrangement within the Oral Health Service.

Member feedback requested

The HSU industrial team is currently reviewing the potential impacts of the proposed restructure upon affected employees. We are now seeking feedback, views and comments from our members.

Please review the attached documentation and provide comment and feedback by 16 December 2019. You can submit it by email to greg.odonohue@hsu.asn.au with subject line *NSLHD Allied Health*.

Not a member of the HSU? Now is the time to join and have your say! You can join online at www.hsu.asn.au/join or call 1300 HSU NSW and join over the phone.

A union's effectiveness and negotiation power depends upon the strength and density of its membership base. Join your work colleagues today by becoming a member of the Health Services Union and help us continue to protect and improve your working life.

In unity,



Gerard Hayes
Secretary, HSU NSW/ACT/QLD



Mr Gerard Hayes
General Secretary
Health Services Union
Level 2, 109 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Email: info@hsu.asn.au

Dear Mr Hayes

Re: Change of 9 Day Fortnight Arrangement and Dental Clinic Operational Hours – Oral Health

I wish to advise that Northern Sydney Local Health District is proposing to change the local 9 day fortnight arrangement and dental clinical operational hours within the Oral Health Service. The attached proposal details the proposed changes of this practice. This proposal solely impacts local rostering practices and has no impact on employee responsibilities or reporting lines.

We propose that the change will take place on the first full pay period on or after 1st February 2020.

I invite you to review the attached proposal and welcome any questions or comments.

Please forward any comments to Ms Gloria Elias-Fallone, Senior HR Consultant before **17th December 2019**. Ms Elias-Fallone can be contacted on (02) 8877 5794 or by email Gloria.EliasFallone@health.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely

Velda Sturt
Director, Oral Health
Northern Sydney Local Health District

DATE: 3rd December 2019

Northern Sydney Local Health District is located on the traditional lands of the Eora Nation

All correspondence to be emailed or sent to:
NSLHD-Mail@health.nsw.gov.au

PO Box 4007
Royal North Shore Hospital LPO
St Leonards NSW 2065
Tel (02) 9462 9955 Fax (02) 9463 1029

Northern Sydney Local Health District
ABN 63 834 171 987

Change of 9 Day Fortnight Arrangement and Dental Clinic Operational Hours – Oral Health

Project sponsor

Name Velda Sturt

Position Director Oral Health

Executive Project sponsor

Name: Kim Field

Position: Director Primary and Community Health

Contents

Stage 1 – Scope, Plan and Approval.....	3
1.1 The Need for Change	3
1.1.1 Description of Service	3
1.1.2 Background	3
1.1.3 Current Structure	3
1.2 Change Plan.....	4
1.2.1 Reason and Purpose of the Change	4
1.2.2 Proposes New Structure	4
1.2.3 Impact on services and functions	5
1.2.4 Likely impact on employees.....	5
Stage 2 – Consultation	6
2.1 Notification to employees.....	6
2.2 Notification to Union/Industrial Bodies and other relevant parties.....	6
Stage 3 – Implementation.....	6

Stage 1 – Scope, Plan and Approval

1.1 The Need for Change

1.1.1 Description of Service

The Northern Sydney Local health District (NSLHD) Oral Health Service (OHS) provides free public dental services to all eligible adults and all young people below the age of 18 years. To meet eligibility all adults are required to be a holder of a Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or Commonwealth Seniors Health Card.

Oral Health services provided include general dentistry at Royal North Shore (RNS), Ryde, Hornsby and Northern Beaches (Brookvale and Mona Vale Dental clinics) as well as specialist dental services at RNS. Oral Health has established pathways for patients with special needs including cerebral palsy, chronic disease, oncology patients, refugee groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

1.1.2 Background

In 2011 a trial was performed whereby all staff in the Dental clinics worked their fortnightly contracted hours, i.e. 76 hours, over 9 working days within the fortnight, with no allocated day off (ADO). This was a change of working conditions which required all staff to work 80 hours over 10 working days in the fortnight and included 1 Allocated Day-Off (ADO) per month. The 9 day fortnight trial ceased in 2013 due to the lack of improvement in sick leave being taken which was a condition of the trial.

In September 2014 the 9 day fortnight arrangement was reinstated and became permanent, however staff were advised in a Memo that an escalation in sick leave may result in the 9 day fortnight being withdrawn. Staff, included in the 9 day fortnight arrangement, in each of the clinics comprise Dental Officers, Oral Health Therapists, Dental Technicians, Dental Assistants and Administrative Reception Staff

To fulfil the requirements of the 9 day fortnight arrangement all full-time clinic staff work a longer day, i.e. 8½ hours per day, to accumulate the required 76 hours over a 9 day period which also requires a longer lunch, i.e. 1 hour, one day per fortnight. To accommodate the increased length in the working day the decision was made in 2014 to bring the clinic opening times forward to 7:30am to maintain an end of working day time of 4:30pm. All the clinics close at 4:00pm.

The 9 day fortnight arrangement was introduced when 98% of all clinic staff, both clinicians and non-clinicians, were full-time employees.

1.1.3 Current Arrangement

Since the introduction of the 9 day fortnight arrangement the percentage of Clinicians, i.e. Dental Officers (DO's) and Oral Health Therapists (OHT's), who work part-time has increased to 61% however the majority of Dental Assistants (DA's) have remained full-time (Table 1 below). The increase in part-time Clinicians has resulted from more Dental Officers only committing to part-time positions in public health due to private practice or family commitments.

Table 1: Number of Full-time vs Part-time staff by classification

	Clinicians	DA's	Working Times	Working Hours
Full-time staff	12	29	7:30 - 4:30	8½ hrs
Part-time staff	19	5	7:30 - 4:00	8 hrs

Public health dentistry requires all Clinicians to have a Dental Assistant in the surgery at all times whilst attending to a patient. All part-time staff work a standard 8 hour day and full-time staff work an 8½ hour day to meet the conditions of the 9 day fortnight. In addition all full-time staff are entitled to an additional ½ hour lunch one day per fortnight which means that, if rostered with a part-time staff member, the part-time staff member is unproductive for ½ hour.

Currently there are only 5 part-time DA's to support 19 part-time Clinicians which results in 14 full-time DA's being non-productive at the end of each day when rostered with a part-time Clinician due to the ½ hour difference in the working hours. An example is Hornsby Dental Clinic which has 4 Clinicians with 3 working part-time. The 3 part-time Clinicians finish work at 4pm, therefore the DA's are unproductive for half an hour each day the part-time Clinician is working.

1.2 Change Plan

1.2.1 Reason and Purpose for the Change

Northern Sydney has the fastest growing aged population in NSW with many of this population requiring services from NSLHD Oral Health. There is ongoing difficulty in getting the aged population to accept appointments prior to 9:30 am due to unwillingness to travel during peak travel time. In addition NSLHD Oral Health has difficulty in attracting child patients to the Oral Health service due to the limited appointment times available out of school hours. The last appointment in NSLHD Oral Health is at 3:30 pm.

To meet our patient expectations appointments should be available at a time more suited to the lifestyle of both our aged population and school attending child population. To identify the gaps NSLHD Oral Health has consulted with their patients through a Patient Survey and with other Local Health Districts regarding operational hours.

Patient Survey

In July 2019 a feedback survey was performed by the NSLHD Oral Health Promotions Manager to determine patient preference regarding appointments times. The total number of patients interviewed was 46. The survey was performed at each Dental Clinic with the following results:

- All respondents were asked their preferred time of day, currently, for a dental appointment with the first appointment available at 7:40 am and the last appointment available at 3:30pm:
 - 63% of all respondents preferred either the middle of the day or the afternoon, of which
 - 75% of all adult patients preferred either the middle of the day or the afternoon,
 - 57% of all child patients preferred either the middle of the day or the afternoon and 40% preferred the early morning.
- All respondents were asked whether they would like after-hours appointments if available:
 - 48% of all respondents would like the opportunity of appointments after 4:30pm, of which
 - 18% of all adult patient would like the opportunity of appointments after 4:30pm,
 - 63% of all child patients would like the opportunity of appointments after 4:30pm,
 - 8% of all respondents would like the opportunity of appointments on a Saturday.

Oral Health Clinic Times in NSW

A review of clinic times at other LHD's in NSW identified all LHD's, apart from Western Sydney LHD, opened between 8:00am and 8:30 am and closed between 4:30pm and 5:00 pm. Western Sydney LHD, the only other LHD in NSW to operate a 9 day fortnight arrangement, has clinic times from 8:00am to 5:00pm.

Western Sydney LHD implemented the 9 day fortnight arrangement as the Dental Officers were offered Rights of Private Practice with the 10th day in the fortnight run a private clinic. NSLHD has not implemented this model.

NSLHD Oral Health Sick Leave

NSLHD Oral Health implemented the 9 day fortnight arrangement as a sick leave reduction strategy.

A Memo was provided, in September 2014, to each staff member advising that the 9 day fortnight may be withdrawn if sick leave did not improve. A review of the % of sick leave taken by staff, since the permanent introduction of the 9 day fortnight arrangement, has demonstrated no improvement in the take up rate.

Year	Sick Leave %
2015-16	4.3%
2016-17	5.2%
2017-18	4.5%
2018-19	4.1%
YTD Sep-19	5.4%

1.2.2 Proposed New Operational Hours and Working Arrangement

To address these identified issues the proposed new structure for NSLHD Oral Health is as follows:

1. All staff work a 5 day week with all full-time staff having one Allocated Day Off (ADO) per month.
2. The ADO would be taken on the 3rd Friday of each month and where the ADO, in a month, is on a public holiday then the ADO is postponed to the 4th Friday of that month. Currently only 4 out of 24 part-time staff work on a Friday which would require negotiation. Flexibility could be applied on an as needs basis.
3. All clinics open at 8:30 am and close at 5:00 pm to better support the needs of the increasing aged population in Northern Sydney, in respect of more reasonable appointment times being available during low traffic periods, and school aged children, in respect of more out of school appointments being available.

1.2.3 Impact on services

The impact on the service is as follows:

1. The child waitlist NSLHD Oral Health has reduced due to the difficulty to attracting school aged children to the service due to the last appointment of the day occurring a 3:30pm. Those school aged children currently attending the service are required to be absent from school to attend appointments. It is not uncommon to have gaps in the appointment books for the OHT's as all the OHT's, apart from 1 OHT, only service child patients.
2. Northern Sydney has the largest growing aged population in NSW which is impacting the NSLHD Oral Health waitlist. The aged population do not accept early morning appointments and request later appointments.
3. The 9 day fortnight arrangement is reliant on all staff members working a longer day, however as NSLHD Oral Health has employed an increased number of part-time Clinicians (61%), in the last 2 years, who work a standard 8 hour day there has been a reduction in productivity each day and also due to 2 Rostered Days Off per month. Attracting full-time Clinicians has become increasing difficult due to many clinicians being committed to private practice arrangements and not wanting to work in public health full-time due to the limited scope of practice.
4. Under the 9 day fortnight arrangement all full-time staff are entitled to an additional 30 minutes of lunch every second Thursday. 86% of all DA's are full-time and when rostered with part-time Clinician this results in overtime being incurred for those DA's as those Clinicians are only entitled to the standard lunch break. If the DA does not work the 30 minutes the Clinician is unproductive for that period.

1.2.4 Likely impact on employees

All staff members, working in each of the clinics, work a 9 day fortnight arrangement. Full-time start work from 7:30am to 4:30pm and part-time staff work a combination of 7:30am to 4:00pm and 8:00am to 4:30pm. Meal breaks will be 30 minutes in line with the Public Hospitals (Professionals and Associated Staff) Conditions of Employment (State) Award.

These positions are:

- Dental Officers – 14.6 FTE
- Oral Health Therapists – 6.3 FTE
- Prosthetist – 0.8 FTE vacant
- Dental Technicians – 2.0 FTE
- Dental Assistants – 31.7 FTE
- Reception Staff – 6.0 FTE

There will be no changes to the Position Descriptions as all staff will continue to work as Dental Officers, Oral Health Therapists, Dental Technicians, Dental Assistants and Reception staff as required under their current Position Descriptions.

Employees will be required to work shorter working days, however will lose one day off per month. Due consideration will be given to employees in relation to impact on arrangements outside of work which may be affected by this change.

Stage 2 – Consultation

2.1 Notification to employees

A staff forum will be organised to advise staff of the proposal. In this forum, staff will also be hand delivered a letter regarding the proposal outlined above.

The Director, Clinical Director and Business Manager will visit each of the clinics to further discuss the proposal with staff members during the consultation period.

It is proposed that the consultation period will be 2 weeks.

2.2 Notification to Union/Industrial Bodies and other relevant parties

The Health Services Union will be sent a letter advising of the proposal for further consultation.

Stage 3 – Implementation

It is proposed that the implementation would occur on 1 February 2020 to ensure no staff member is disadvantaged in relation to their current 9 day fortnight roster day off.