



College of Emergency Nurses, New Zealand - New Zealand Nurses Organisation

Hon Andrew Little,
Minister of Health,
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160
New Zealand

By email: a.little@ministers.govt.nz

cc. Mairi Lucas, Acting CEO, NZNO, by email: Mairi.Lucas@nzno.org.nz

cc. Kate Weston, by email: Kate.Weston@nzno.org.nz

cc. Office of Chief Nurse, Ministry of Health, by email: c/- debra.begg@health.govt.nz

Dear Minister

Re: Safety concerns in New Zealand Emergency Departments

I am writing as the incoming Chair of the College of Emergency Nurses New Zealand – NZNO (CENZ), to highlight our ongoing concerns regarding the impact of hospital overcrowding on safety in the Emergency Department.

Members of CENZ from around the country continue to voice their concerns regarding patient safety and professional risk due to staffing and department capacity being overwhelmed on a daily basis.

Safe staffing is a key component of a healthy workplace. Daily short staffing, requests to work double shifts, fatigue and burnout are not. The staffing shortages within our emergency departments have reached crisis point.

It is essential that robust data is obtained and evidence-based tools are developed, to underpin appropriate staffing calculations and support adequate Care Capacity Demand Management (CCDM). CENZ is aware of the Safe Staffing / Healthy workplaces Unit delaying CCDM implementation and TrendCare implementation into Emergency Departments. This has occurred without consultation or acknowledgement of the extreme staffing shortages for nursing in New Zealand Emergency Departments.

Emergency Departments need to be included in the CCDM reporting framework so that the staffing crisis is made visible, and that processes can be funded and implemented to move towards a safe practice environment. Further delays to finding solutions for this complex issue will only exacerbate the dilemmas faced by nurses each day and increase the risk of poor patient outcomes.

Nurses experience significant moral distress when they are unable to offer the necessary level of care, as they are aware of the likely negative impacts on patient outcomes. The inability to move admitted patients to hospital wards greatly reduces emergency staff resources to achieve a timely response to

new patients arriving. As you will be aware, access block is a symptom of inadequate acute capacity in our hospitals requiring multifactorial, evidence-based sustainable solutions.

The provision of personal care to people in corridors and other informal spaces is not acceptable and adds to patient distress during their time of crisis. We will be calling upon emergency nurses to cease using these informal spaces to provide patient care.

We would welcome a meeting with you Minister, to discuss the issues highlighted in this letter to enable a deeper understanding of emergency nursing concerns.

We look forward to your intervention in these issues to ensure that emergency nursing receives increased staffing allocation to address the significant shortfalls across the country.

Yours faithfully

Sue Stebbeings
Chairperson
College of Emergency Nurses New Zealand - NZNO