

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. 9 of 2022 House of Assembly

The petitioners ask the House to:

Despite the best efforts of healthcare professionals, the health crisis has continued to deepen. Chronic understaffing is placing enormous strain on nurses and midwives and putting patients at increased risk. The health system is now wholly reliant on the use of overtime shifts and agency staff. This puts unfair demands on healthcare workers, has a negative impact on patients, and is a grossly inefficient use of taxpayer funds. How the health system and workforce would cope with a serious COVID-19 outbreak is unclear. Despite this, the government has been reluctant to take meaningful, urgent action. Everyday of delay sees staff conditions deteriorate further, and patients at greater risk.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the House to call on the Tasmanian Government to immediately implement measures to support the recruitment and retention of health workers. These need to include:

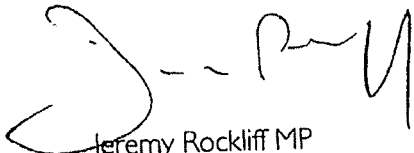
- a commitment to fully staffing the health system
- permanently filling every vacant nurse and midwife position
- employing the additional clinical nurse educators and clinical coaches required to ensure proper clinical support for all staff
- increasing base salary of nurses and midwives comparable to other jurisdictions

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

RESPONSE:

- Workforce pressures are being experienced across all health care systems nationally and globally.
- In response, the Government has announced a range of measures to support the recruitment and retention of health workers, with a commitment to fully staffing the health system and permanently filling every vacant nurse and midwife position.
- From the beginning of the pandemic between July 2020 and August 2022 we have funded an increase of over 1,500 paid FTE across the Department, with almost 900 of those in the last financial year with a majority being front-line health professionals.
- We have proposed a \$2,000 pro rata, one-off Frontline Health COVID-19 Allowance to relevant THS and Ambulance Tasmania staff in hospitals, inpatient units and ancillary health care units. This includes Nurses, Midwives, Doctors, Allied Health professionals, Orderlies, Ward Clerks, Food Services, Cleaners and Ambulance Tasmania Paramedics.
- To encourage nurses and midwives back into the Tasmanian Health Service, the Government has proposed a Return-to-Work Bonus of up to \$2,000 per person for any Ahpra-registered health professional who has resigned from the Department of Health/Tasmanian Health Service in the 12 months prior to 31 July 2022.
- To ensure this promotes retention, the bonus will be paid as a \$1,000 (pro rata) sign-on bonus, with the second \$1,000 (pro rata) paid after six months if the nurse or midwife is still employed on this date.
- Our offer to bring forward wage negotiations for the next round of the Nursing and Midwifery Agreement still stands.
- To further support recruitment and retention within the nursing workforce, I have asked the Department of Health Secretary, Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, to lead a Strategic Nursing Recruitment and Retention Working Group, to recommend other measures to be considered as part of our strategy to support workforce need within the Tasmanian health system.
- Part of this work will involve workforce modelling to estimate the required staffing for pandemic peaks, which will allow for acceleration of deferred care in pandemic troughs.
- Strengthening our current Enrolled Nurse (EN) workforce is another key initiative that will consider all current vacancies for opportunities to employ ENs where clinically appropriate.
- Additional support roles including Clinical Coaches will be a key consideration for the proper clinical support for all staff, particularly in those areas where there are early career nurses. This will create a more supportive practice environment.

- We will reform the Statewide Nursing Transition to Practice Model, providing a fast-track pathway to make a job available for all UTAS nursing graduates, accelerating probationary periods and streamlining selection processes, significantly saving the time of our senior nursing staff.
- The Government has proposed that negotiations commence for a new Nurses and Midwives Agreement that will include wages provisions, should this be acceptable to unions and their members.
- At the outset, I recognise that health workforces nationally, if not globally, are experiencing incredible strain and pressure as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our hospital and health services.
- Ensuring retention of our health workforce is a long-term challenge that all health systems are facing and with that in mind, the measures demonstrate the Government's commitment to addressing the challenges being faced by our health care workers across our health care system.



Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier
Minister for Health

Date: 24/8/22

