



Hunter New England
Local Health District

Media Alert

Temporary reduction of services at Wee Waa Health Service

Thursday, 20 April 2023

Please attribute this statement to a Hunter New England Health spokesperson

There are significant challenges securing healthcare staff in rural and regional areas, not just for the Hunter and New England regions, but across Australia.

Wee Waa Health Service is experiencing these challenges, where despite extensive recruitment efforts the service has a number of nursing vacancies it has been unable to fill.

To ensure ongoing safe patient care, we have made the difficult decision to temporarily reduce some services at Wee Waa Health Service from Monday, 8 May 2023.

We acknowledge this is disappointing for the local community and apologise for the inconvenience this may cause.

At the request of the Minister for Health, we will establish a working party that includes local members of parliament and community representatives to look at the best way of ensuring our dedicated staff are supported and able to continue providing safe care while also serving the needs of the community.

Under these temporary arrangements as recruitment efforts continue, the emergency department at Wee Waa Health Service will continue to operate from 8am until 5.30pm, seven days a week. Patients who require emergency care outside these hours should call '000' or attend Narrabri Hospital.

If an illness or injury is not life-threatening, we encourage people to visit their GP or call Healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222, which is a 24-hour telephone health advice line staffed by registered nurses to provide fast, expert advice on any health issue and what to do next.

Patients presenting to Wee Waa Health Service who require admission will receive inpatient care at Narrabri Hospital or another appropriate facility within the District. All hospitals within the District are part of an integrated and collaborative network.

While we continue to actively recruit to nursing vacancies, we're also working hard to redeploy nursing staff from other areas and engage nursing agencies to cover any gaps in the rosters, with the ultimate goal of increasing these services back to their usual state.

We are also working with our public and private health partners in surrounding areas, and NSW Ambulance, to ensure the community continues to access the health services it needs.

We thank the local community for their understanding and our staff for their dedication during this challenging time.

HUNTER NEW ENGLAND LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT MEDIA UNIT

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