

To: Hon Ryan Park,
Minister for Health,
52 Martin Place,
Sydney, NSW 2000.

Via email: [REDACTED]

From: Winston Cheung,
Chair, Medical Staff Council,
Concord Repatriation General Hospital.
Email: [REDACTED]

1st November 2023.

Re. Result of Concord Repatriation General Hospital Medical Staff Council Vote of No Confidence in SLHD Board on 26th October 2023

Dear Ryan,

The Concord Hospital Medical Staff Council held a vote of no confidence in the Board of the Sydney Local Health District on Thursday 26th October 2023.

The motion was passed, with 59 MSC members voting "for" (58.4%) and 42 MSC members voting "against" (41.6%).

The reason for the vote of no confidence in the Board of the Sydney Local Health District was the continued failure to address the root causes of the problems that have afflicted Concord Hospital for many years, following on from our vote of no confidence in the Chief Executive in June 2023.

I respectfully request that you meet with a delegation from the Medical Staff Council at Concord Hospital and other staff, so that you can be briefed on our perspective of what the problems are. The perspective of the staff at Concord Hospital will be very different to the one that you have been getting from NSW Health.

We have no confidence in the Chief Executive of the Sydney Local Health District.

We have no confidence in the Board of the Sydney Local Health District.

There is little trust in the managers overseeing Concord Hospital to act in the best interests of the patients, their families and the community, and little trust in them acting in the best interests of the health and well-being of staff.

We are uncertain whether NSW Health is accurately explaining to you what is actually happening at the "grassroots" at Concord. This is why we would like to brief you directly.

I have been working at Concord Hospital now for 18 years. Working conditions here right now are the worst that I have seen during my entire time here. Our workforce at Concord Hospital is now demoralised because of years of progressive failures of the hospital to help staff keep up with demand for services.

The colloquial term used by staff for this is a “death by 1000 cuts”.

There are few efficiency gains left to be made. Many management decisions from this point to improve efficiency will instead only result in a reduction in services to the public, and further adverse effects for the health and well-being of staff.

Staff have left, and more are leaving.

A “culture review” was started following our vote of no confidence in the Chief Executive of the SLHD in June 2023. Attempts have been made to address some of the resourcing issues, but the major issues which were the root causes of the problems at Concord Hospital remain unresolved.

As I explained to you at our meeting in July 2022, there is a culture of fear at Concord Hospital. There is a culture of intimidation, bullying and harassment. There is a culture of concealment, cover-up and denial. There is a culture of spin.

Since our vote of no confidence in the Chief Executive in June 2023, the number of unreported radiology images has grown to over 50000. This has happened despite the “culture review” and actions taken by the Sydney Local Health District Executive and Board.

Another radiologist resigned last week.

At our Medical Staff Council meeting on the 26th October, the mediator for the “culture review” explained that his preliminary assessment is that the major problems at Concord Hospital are because of poor “communication”.

Poor communication did not cause the problem of 50000 unreported radiology images.

The company conducting the “culture review” at Concord Hospital is being paid in excess of \$300,000 dollars by NSW Health. This represents a potential significant financial conflict of interest because the size of the contract and the commercial interest the company has in obtaining future work from NSW Health could lead to an incentive for the company to bias its findings in favour of the culture being satisfactory.

This “culture review” will not provide justice for the staff who have been bullied and harassed, many of which have now left. This is because we have been told that the “culture review” will not be formally investigating allegations of intimidation, bullying and harassment.

Only an independent external investigation will provide justice.

We look forward to a brighter future for Concord Hospital, and to the root causes of the problems that have afflicted Concord Hospital finally being addressed.

Trust must be restored in the management of Concord Hospital.

This is not happening at the moment.

Once again, I respectfully request that you meet with our delegation from Concord Hospital, so that you can be briefed on the staff's perspective of what the problems are, and not the NSW Health perspective.

Yours Sincerely,

Winston Cheung,

Chair,

Medical Staff Council,

Concord Repatriation General Hospital.

Senior Staff Specialist,

Intensive Care Unit,

Concord Repatriation General Hospital.

Clinical Associate Professor,

Sydney Medical School – Concord, University of Sydney.