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MEDIA RELEASE

FRIDAY 13 DECEMBER 2024

St Vincent's Private Hospitals nurses and midwives to start daily rolling stop works across all shifts

Hundreds of St Vincent's Private Hospitals nurses and midwives will start daily rolling stop work protected industrial action across the morning, afternoon and night shifts from 7am, Friday 13 December.

The ANMF has over 1000 members in a St Vincent's Private nursing and midwifery workforce of around 1400.

Theatre and recovery nurses will hold a further stop work action on Wednesday 18 December by refusing to work the afternoon surgery session (except for ensuring staff for emergency cases).

No more than one third of rostered nurses will stop work on any shift in larger wards to ensure patient safety.

The industrial action to secure more nurses and midwives and safer staffing levels at the St Vincent's Private Hospitals is unprecedented in Victoria's private acute hospital sector.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) has been attempting to negotiate wages and conditions for members at St Vincent's Private Hospitals in Fitzroy, East Melbourne, Werribee and Kew since June 2024.

ANMF (Vic Branch) Assistant Secretary Madeleine Harradence said: 'St Vincent's Private nurses and midwives have voiced serious concerns about understaffing which leads to missed patient care and workforce exhaustion.

'They're escalating their action as a last resort because management is not listening and not responding to their concerns,' Ms Harradence said.

'Patient health, safety or welfare will not be at risk but there may be some inconvenience and for that we apologise and ask for the community's support for our members while they fight for safer staffing levels.

'Perversely having expensive health insurance as a patient in a Victorian private hospital currently means you have fewer nurses and midwives to care for you than if you were a patient in a public hospital,' she said.

As nurses and midwives burn out they are increasingly refusing to answer the calls to cover shifts – so much so that St Vincent's Private maternity service in Fitzroy, one of the busiest in the state, went on by-pass overnight on Wednesday 4 December because staff would not volunteer to come in.

'We know safe staffing saves lives, reduces patient readmission and is a cost-effective way of preventing understaffing and maintaining a stable permanent early career and experienced nursing and midwifery workforce.

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian Branch) offices:

Ballarat Bendigo Geelong Melbourne Morwell Shepparton Swan Hill Wangaratta Warrnambool

'As an example - two nurses for 18 patients overnight, with no separate in charge support, in the acute medical surgical ward at every St Vincent's Private Hospitals site in all larger wards/units is an unacceptable workload and can mean missed care,' Ms Harradence said.

ANMF has sadly not heard from or met with St Vincent's management and HR since 29 November but remains available to meet with St Vincent's Private Hospitals management to resolve the dispute.

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The ANMF (Vic Branch) has more than 105,000 members – nurses, midwives and aged care personal care workers – across the Victorian health, mental health and aged care sectors.