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### ***Caring Together* in the Illawarra & Shoalhaven**

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, today announced interviews will begin next week for the 30 new jobs being created at two Illawarra and two Shoalhaven hospitals.

“More than 400 applications have been received for the 103 Clinical Support Officer positions (CSOs) which were advertised in June for the South Eastern Sydney Illawarra Area Health Service,” the Minister said.

“Clinical Support Officers will be appointed at Wollongong Hospital (18), Shellharbour Hospital (6), Shoalhaven and District Memorial Hospital (5) and Milton Hospital (1).

“Their appointments will free up nurses at those hospitals to focus on patient care and safety, not paperwork.

“This is part of the \$117 million 2009-10 state budget roll-out of the first stage of the government’s *Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for NSW*.

“Ward-based Clinical Support Officers will assist local nurses with administration and paperwork relating to recruitment, rostering, stock and supply orders and reports, to ensure they can spend more time caring for patients,” the Minister said.

“The introduction of the CSO will allow for a changing in the role of the senior nurse who’ll become the *Nurse in Charge* or *Midwife in Charge*.

“The burden of paperwork will be removed enabling them to focus on coordinating services and care around the needs of each patient.”

That includes:

- Responding immediately to any deterioration in a patient's condition;
- Supervising the work of junior staff;
- Ensuring patients and their families understand what is happening with their care;
- Making sure patients’ meals are served appropriately; and
- Making sure ward areas are clean and hygiene standards are maintained.

Mr Della Bosca made today’s announcement on the CSO interview process during a visit to Wollongong Hospital where he met with Illawarra doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and local health advisory committees.

“This consultation is a vital step towards improving patient care in hospitals across NSW after the government accepted 134 of the 139 recommendations of the Garling Inquiry,” the Minister said.

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“According to Commissioner Garling, NSW has one of the best health systems in the world and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Medical Association assessments show we have the best performing Emergency Departments in the country.

But the challenges of increasing health costs and an ageing population need to be met.

“The *Caring Together* action plan is the result of extensive consultation across the State and from working closely with doctors, nurses and other health staff.

“While the NSW Government is getting on with the job of improving health services, the State Opposition wants to double the number of area health services from eight to 20, ripping \$300 million out of frontline services, the cost equivalent of 3,500 nurses,” the Minister said.

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