



Jillian Skinner
Minister for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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ROUNDTABLE ON SECURITY IN NSW HOSPITALS

Health Minister Jillian Skinner met today with the Health Services Union to outline extra security measures to deal with aggression and violence in hospitals.

Mrs Skinner and NSW Secretary of Health Dr Mary Foley met HSU NSW secretary Gerard Hayes at the NSW Ministry of Health in North Sydney.

Mr Hayes requested the meeting following a violent incident in the emergency department of Nepean Hospital on January 12 when a police officer and a member of the security staff were shot by a patient who seized the police officer's gun.

"The security and welfare of staff, patients and visitors in our hospitals is paramount," Mrs Skinner said.

"In recent times, the well documented increase in drug and alcohol-related aggression in the community created challenges for our hospitals, particularly in the emergency departments.

"Today's meeting with the Health Services Union was very productive. The union outlined its concerns and was positive about a suite of new measures we propose to address them."

The measures to address violence in NSW public hospitals are:

1. Convening a roundtable of health stakeholders, including the HSU and other industrial bodies, to identify the issues, roles and responsibilities of all parties in ensuring security in our hospitals.
2. Additional security staff in hospitals with a demonstrated increased need.
3. An audit of anti-violence measures to assess how emergency departments are applying NSW Health policies. The current measures include: duress alarms, CCTV monitoring, clinical intervention strategies, staff training and security staff proximity and availability to respond to incidents.
4. Ensuring the physical design of emergency departments which have had the most significant increases in "ice"-affected patient presentations is suitable for safely managing these patients.
5. Training sessions for clinical and security staff working in emergency departments with a high level of "ice" presentations (to commence in March).

6. A review of current arrangements with NSW Police about how to address aggression from drug and alcohol-affected patients.
7. A working group with the HSU to look at ways to further professionalise the role of NSW Health security staff. This will build on a current initiative with TAFE which allows people to qualify for their security licence through a course which is health workplace specific.

Mrs Skinner ruled out giving equipment such as batons and handcuffs to security staff.

She said security staff in NSW hospitals currently have powers to physically restrain - by a reasonable amount of force - a patient or visitor who poses an imminent threat to security staff, other staff, another patient or a visitor.