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F E D E R A T I O N

# Media Release

Attention: news, health,  
industrial, politics

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## Northeast Health Wangaratta nurses to meet on Tuesday 9 February to consider hospital-wide action

Wangaratta Base Hospital nurses will meet on Tuesday 9 February, 2.30pm to consider taking action to support their understaffed colleagues and their patients in the emergency department. Nurses will consider taking significant industrial action including bed closures, elective theatre session cancellations, restrictions on outpatient services and paperwork bans.

Australian Nursing Federation (Victorian Branch) Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick said: "Nurses only consider taking action as a last resort and they feel the systemic understaffing of the emergency department cubicles could compromise safe emergency patient care."

For the past two years emergency department nurses and the Australian Nursing Federation (Victorian Branch) have held unsuccessful negotiations with management to implement the mandated minimum nurse patient ratios agreed with the Victorian Government and the hospital's industrial representatives in October 2007.

Since 21 January nurses have utilised only nine of Wangaratta Hospital's 12 emergency department cubicles due to management's continued understaffing and refusal to staff four nurses, plus a triage nurse and a nurse in charge as required by the 2007 public sector nurses agreement.

The emergency department ratios for 12 cubicles agreed to and funded in the 2007 public sector nurses agreement, between the Australian Nursing Federation (Victorian Branch), the Victorian Government and the Victorian Hospitals' Industrial Association, are:

- morning shift: nurse in charge, triage nurse plus 4 nurses for 12 cubicles
- afternoon shift: nurse in charge, triage nurse plus 4 nurses for 12 cubicles
- night shift: nurse in charge, plus 4 nurses for 12 cubicles.

In order to implement the ratios, however, from 7am Thursday 21 January, given the number of rostered staff, the number of emergency department cubicles available for patients have been:

- morning shift: nurse in charge, triage nurse plus 3 nurses for 9 cubicles
- afternoon shift: nurse in charge, triage nurse plus 3 nurses for 9 cubicles
- night shift: nurse in charge, plus 2 nurses for 6 cubicles.

"Nurses at Wangaratta know that the community needs those 12 cubicles open in order to meet the demand on this service," Ms Fitzpatrick said.

The meeting will be held at Wangaratta Base Hospital, Tuesday 9 February 2010 at 2.30pm. The meeting is closed to the media. Following the meeting at approximately 4pm, ANF Industrial Officer Brendan Soraghan will be available to speak to the media.

Australian Nursing Federation (Victorian Branch) Media Officer Robyn Asbury 0417 523 252

ANF (Vic Branch) is Victoria's peak industrial and professional body representing more than 49,000 nurses and midwives.  
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