



**HACSU**

Health & Community  
Services Union

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Attention: The Hon. Jaala Pulford MP, The Hon. Ingrid Stitt MP, The Hon. Gayle Tierney MP,  
The Hon. Melissa Horne MP, The Hon. Jill Hennessey MP, Sarah Connolly MP, Katie Hall MP,  
Cesar Melham MP, Kaushaliya Vaghela MP

**BY EXPRESS POST**

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Dear Jaala, Ingrid, Gayle, Melissa, Jill, Sarah, Katie, Cesar and Kaushaliya,

#### **RE MENTAL HEALTH ENTERPRISE BARGAINING AGREEMENT – MERCY HEALTH IN CRISIS**

We are writing to you on behalf of the mental health workforce at Mercy Health regarding the crisis facing our members due to the stalled enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations. After 18 months of bargaining, HACSU has been forced to take the decision to launch protected action ballots at a further two public area mental health services, with action ongoing at 15 services including Mercy Health.

HACSU and its members have no choice but to escalate this campaign. A disappointing offer was made to the workforce on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 2021, one day prior to the statewide stop work. We note that this was the first offer made after 18 months.

The offer reinforces to our members that the Victorian Government does not value our mental health workforces. While we acknowledge the offer includes small measures to address staffing shortfalls and the beginnings of a lived experience classification and salary structure, it is our view that more robust commitments must urgently be made to grow and develop the workforce.

A 2% pay rise would see nurses, social workers, and occupational therapists worse off than their counterparts in the rest of public health system. There are still significant and dangerous staffing gaps, with no substantial offer to improve the working conditions of our administrative staff and our world-first Reproductive Health and Wellbeing clause has been cast aside.

The rejection of our claims, specifically in relation to mental health educators across the state and better working conditions for all our mental workforce, dismisses the findings of the Royal Commission into Mental Health. The findings were clear in that measures to attract and retain staff, incentivization and the implementation of a stronger workplace safety strategy is imperative. The mental health workforce has not had a pay rise in 2 years and our data shows that least 10% of the workforce are considering leaving the sector all together in 12 months. While we welcome capital works commencing on opening new beds, we know for a fact that these beds will be stalled in opening due to severe staffing shortages. It is our view that workforce investment must come first.

The mental health workforce at Mercy Health has been on the frontline in assisting in your community through this challenging period and they have sacrificed their own mental health and wellbeing to do so. At present the service is down by approximately 47 staff members. This has resulted in our mental health members from a range of disciplines working many overtime shifts in a row, at the expense of their own health and safety. HACSU have been made aware of some Mercy members that have **never** worked in an inpatient unit or a community team that has ever been fully staffed. Instances of this are riddled throughout your service.



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We are committed to assisting your government in implementing every single recommendation of the Royal Commission into Mental Health. But we cannot stay silent when Members of Parliament do not advocate for the very people who are tasked with implementing these lifesaving services for the Victorian community.

We are seeking to meet with each of you to discuss this further and to implore you to raise this with Minister Merlino and Minister Pallas as a matter of urgency.

The Victorian mental health workforce and your communities simply cannot wait.

In unity,

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**Paul Healey**  
State Secretary  
Health and Community Services Union

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**Kate Marshall**  
Assistant State Secretary  
Health and Community Services Union

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**Lisa Andrew**  
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