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***Caring Together* at Armidale Hospital**

Nurses working in Armidale Hospital will be freed up to focus on patient care not paperwork, with the recruitment of four clinical support officers now under way.

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, said during a visit to the hospital today, the recruitment is part the government's *Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for NSW*.

"Job advertisements are now appearing in regional and metropolitan newspapers for the new positions with 500 being created in NSW," the Minister said.

"Ward-based clinical support officers will assist local nurses with administration and paperwork relating to recruitment, rostering, stock and supply orders and reports so nursing staff can spend more time caring for patients."

The initiative will enable senior nurses to focus on coordinating services and care around the needs of each patient, including:

- 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.

Potential candidates for the clinical support officer positions should go to www.health.nsw.gov.au/jobs

Mr Della Bosca said \$117 million was allocated in the 2009-10 State Budget to roll out the *Caring Together* action plan.

"As the Garling Report points out, NSW has one of the better public health care systems in the developed world, but we need to meet the challenges of increasing health costs and an ageing population.

"The *Caring Together* action plan is the result of extensive consultation with doctors, nurses and other health staff.

"These initiatives are only the beginning of important changes to continue to deliver the best possible health care and to ensure on-going patient care and safety.

The announcement was welcomed by Member for Northern Tablelands, Richard Torbay.

"This is great news for the hospital, its senior nursing staff and patients," Mr Torbay said.

"The hospital has also been allocated funding for two rural pre-vocational training positions for junior doctors in their second and third postgraduate years," he added.

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Mr Della Bosca said that while the NSW Government is getting on with the job of improving health services, Barry O'Farrell and the Opposition Health spokeswoman have a plan to wreck the public health system.

"They want to double the number of area health services from eight to 20, drowning patients in red tape and ripping \$300 million out of frontline services. Their reckless plan will put patient care and safety in jeopardy," the Minister said

"It will cost the equivalent of 3,500 frontline nursing staff and not deliver one extra service to patients.

"It is a prime example of the Opposition's ineptitude when it comes to policy development. They have no practical plan and no vision when it comes to health services," he added.

Media Contact: Melissa Collins 0410 554 688