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Caring Together: new support staff to free up Hunter nurses

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, announced today nurses in the Hunter will be freed up to focus on patient care - not paperwork- with the recruitment of 46 new clinical support officers under way.

Mr Della Bosca said the recruitment was part of the NSW Government's *Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for NSW*.

"Job advertisements in regional and metropolitan newspapers will start appearing from tomorrow (Saturday 28 June) for the new positions with 500 being created across the State," 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, to ensure they can spend more time caring for patients.

"They will be working at Calvary Mater (six), John Hunter (24), Maitland (seven), Belmont (three) and Manning Base Hospital (six)," the Minister said.

The burden of paperwork will be removed enabling 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.

Minister for the Hunter, Jodi McKay, welcomed the announcement.

"These clinical support officers will enable hospitals in the Hunter to continue to provide first class services and for nurses to focus on patient care and safety," Ms McKay said.

"This is a great initiative and comes on top of the capital works for health projects announced in the 2009-10 State Budget including \$8.3 million for the Newcastle Mater Hospital redevelopment; \$8.2 million to complete Maitland Hospital Emergency Department upgrade and \$6.9 million for completion of the 20-bed Mental Health Unit at James Fletcher Hospital," she said.

Mr Della Bosca said 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 across the State and from working closely with doctors, nurses and other health staff," the Minister said.

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“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,” he added.

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