

Mr Gerard Hayes
Secretary
Health Services Union (HSU)
info@hsu.asn.au

Dear Mr Hayes,

Consultation – North Canberra Hospital (NCH) Mental Health Consultation Liaison (MHCL) Team Extended Hours Proposal

In accordance with Section F (Communication and Consultation) of the ACT Public Sector Health Professional Enterprise Agreement 2023–2026, where there are proposals by the ACT Public Service to introduce change within a Directorate, the head of service will consult with affected employees and their relevant union representatives.

This correspondence is to formally advise of a proposed change to the hours of operation for the North Canberra Hospital MHCL clinicians (Registered Nurses and Health Professionals) and to commence consultation with affected staff and relevant unions.

What are the proposed changes

The proposal is to extend the hours of operation of the NCH MHCL service to provide extended hours of clinician coverage seven days per week, including weekends and public holidays.

Currently, the NCH MHCL team operates extended hours Monday to Friday (0700–2130) with reduced hours coverage on weekends and public holidays. Under the proposed model, MHCL coverage would be consistent across all days of the week.

The proposed future model includes:

- All days – 2 x clinicians rostered on the morning shift (0700–1530)
- All days – 2 x clinicians rostered on the evening shift (1300–2130)

This change is supported by confirmed funding and successful recruitment to previously unfunded positions, enabling a sustainable and operationally achievable service expansion.

Describe the proposal and the change(s)

The purpose of this proposal is to improve access to timely and consistent mental health assessment and consultation for consumers presenting to NCH, particularly outside standard business hours. The current NCH MHCL model provides reduced coverage on weekends and public holidays, which can result in delays to specialised mental health review, disposition planning, and clinical decision-making within the Emergency Department and inpatient units.

These gaps in coverage place additional pressure on emergency department and ward clinicians and can negatively impact patient flow and consumer experience. Extending MHCL



service hours to operate on an extended-hours model across seven days per week, including weekends and public holidays, will address these limitations by ensuring MHCL clinicians are available during periods of peak demand.

Recent confirmation of funding for previously unfunded positions, along with successful recruitment, makes this service expansion operationally achievable, more efficient, and sustainable. The proposed change also aligns with the broader integration of NCH mental health services under MHJHADS governance, strengthening leadership, accountability, and clinical oversight in line with the Canberra Health Services Strategic Plan.

What are the benefits?

Extending the NCH MHCL service hours will support more consistent service delivery and clearer expectations for staff and stakeholders across all days of the week.

A broader span of service coverage will enable more flexible and responsive deployment of MHCL resources across the Emergency Department and inpatient units. This allows rostering to better align with periods of peak demand and provides a more balanced distribution of clinical workload across the week.

Providing extended hours seven days per week, including public holidays, will improve the timeliness of mental health assessment and care planning. This will reduce delays in clinical decision-making, enhance patient flow, and support more effective and appropriate disposition outcomes for consumers.

Overall, the model strengthens integration, improves service accessibility, and supports the delivery of safe, high-quality, person-centred mental health care.

Next steps

The consultation period will commence on 20 February 2026 and close 6 March 2026. Staff forums will be held during the consultation period to allow discussion and feedback. Feedback can be provided via email to CHSGMMHJHADS@act.gov.au.

If you have any questions or require further information regarding the consultation process, please do not hesitate to contact Shaun Bayliss at CHSGMMHJHADS@act.gov.au.

I look forward to your response and contribution to this consultation process.

Yours sincerely,



Bruno Aloisi
General Manager
Mental Health, Justice Health, and Alcohol & Drug Services

20 February 2025

