

Private and Confidential

Thursday, 12 March 2026

Mr Gerard Hayes
NSW Secretary
Health Services Union
Level 2, 109 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Sent via email: info@hsu.asn.au; secretary@hsu.asn.au

Dear Mr Hayes,

Re: Mental Health Intake Line – Greater Newcastle Mental Health Service

I am writing to the Health Services Union (HSU) with respect to an internal review of the Mental Health intake line (MHIL) multidisciplinary positions and their respective level/grading.

The review and subsequent report were completed by the Deputy Director of Nursing for Mental Health Services and the Head of Discipline, Occupational Therapy Mental Health Services following local consultation with the service team.

The attached report provides the methodology of the process, the consultation undertaken by the reviewers with the multi-disciplinary team and the resultant findings and recommendations.

I can advise that the report was shared with the Mental Health Intake Service clinical team on Friday, 27 February 2026.

By way of background, when a vacancy arises in Mental Health Intake Service, positions graded as Level 3 or Clinical Psychology are initially advertised at that level. In accordance with the *Advertising and Transitioning Procedures for Allied Health Positions Advertised as Level 1, 2 or 3 (HNELHD Guideline 25_04*, if a Level 3 role does not attract a suitable applicant, or is known to be hard to fill, it may be re-advertised as a Level 1, 2, or 3 position.

Applicants at Level 1 or 2 must still address the Level 3 selection criteria. Their responses should demonstrate their current level of competence in relation to those criteria, as well as their capacity and commitment to progress toward Level 3 requirements. These applicants are employed on the basis that they will participate in,

and successfully complete, transitional competency-based assessments over the required period of service (three years full-time equivalent post-graduate clinical experience). Successful completion of these assessments confirms that they have achieved the competencies expected of a Level 3 clinician.

This process functions as a structured support and training program to assist employees in working toward appointment at Level 3. It allows new graduates to enter specialist mental health services with a defined pathway for development and progression.

Where a lesser-experienced applicant is appointed, both their work performance expectations and salary should reflect their years of experience. Level 1/2 transitional positions to Level 3 are already in place within Mental Health Intake Services.

The Service has reviewed the recent findings, which recognised the team's strong capacity to support early-career graduates and highlighted the important role that more experienced staff play in this support. However, the current structure for Allied Health, where all positions are graded at Level 3 or Clinical Psychology, creates a flat workforce profile.

This lack of role differentiation limits Allied Health's ability to:

- Provide clear professional leadership aligned with the expectations of more senior roles, and
- Ensure early-career and transitioning staff understand that professional and clinical leadership is a core function of these senior positions.

To optimise stronger clinical governance and enhance team function, it is essential that these positions operate differently, with clearer gradation, differentiated responsibilities and defined leadership expectations

To strengthen alignment between grading, scope of practice and professional standards and in keeping with the review findings, the Service is endorsing all recommendations to support the effective implementation of these principles including:

- positions need to be clearly differentiated, with distinct gradation, defined leadership expectations, and responsibilities that reflect their intended scope and level of practice
- an approach to **future vacancies** where the team and service environment is assessed as capable of appropriately supporting a lesser-graded clinician, and
- where the team has the capacity to provide the required in-shift clinical leadership, developmental support, and transitional competency-based processes.

- positions may then be advertised at Level 2 within a clearer and more structured governance framework.

It is envisaged that the HSU will liaise with members on the recommendation(s) as provided in the report.

We respectfully request a response to the recommendation(s) on or before Friday, 27th March 2026.

If you have any further questions regarding the above, please contact me on 4033 5179.

Yours sincerely



Cath Wood
Director Allied Health
HNE Mental Health Services

Enc.

CC: Fionna Murphy, Acting Operations Manager Mental Health Services
Mark Andrei, HR Manager Mental Health Services