



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday 1 September 2021

### **KIDS EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT SUFFERING ITS OWN EMERGENCY**

Doctors in the Paediatric Emergency Department at Adelaide's Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH) are at their wits end regarding a lack of treatment spaces and medical under-staffing, which they say are putting children's safety at risk.

And they are calling on the Women's and Children's Board to intervene and fix the situation before it's too late.

The doctors say the current Paediatric Emergency Department at the WCH has just 19 treatment spaces when it should have 32 according to national guidelines and interstate comparisons.

And the medical workforce is 24% below the Australasian average according to the 'presentations per medical staff' ratio. That equates to a shortage of 10 full-time training medical officers at the North Adelaide hospital compared to the average of comparative interstate children's Emergency Departments.

The doctors say this is putting patients, families and the workforce under incredible stress, with the Emergency Department well beyond capacity, and lengthy delays in patient care.

The graphs below show 'patient presentations per medical FTE' and 'average wait times' at the WCH both massively above national averages and comparative hospitals.

The WCH now has the worst record for missing the 'four-hour discharge' target for patients and the worst 'did not wait' record of any similar hospital in the nation. 8.9% of patients who attend the WCH PED don't wait to be seen.

The doctors say they are losing confidence in the hospital management, which has not acted on a Business Case presented in May which shows the ED is massively short on both treatment spaces and medical staff.

SASMOA says the situation is now untenable and will be calling on the Premier to intervene with the Hospital Board on behalf of the state's children and families.

"The Paediatric Emergency Department at the Women's and Children's is in crisis," says SASMOA Chief Industrial Officer Bernadette Mulholland.

"The doctors have knocked management's door down with warnings and proactive suggestions and are at their wits end. They are simply not being listened to by management."

Doctors are telling SASMOA virtual triage assessment and GP liaison initiatives implemented by the hospital management have missed the mark and are wasting tax-payers money.

SASMOA member and WCH Emergency Department Doctor Davinder Gill says: “The ED is both under-sized and under-staffed on all comparative measures, and the results are now there for everyone to see every day and every night.

“Many patients wait more than 4 hours, some even up to 8 hours to be seen. Almost 9% of patients don’t even wait to be seen. Key performance indicators are the worst in the country. The situation has been deteriorating for years and has been continuously neglected by hospital management.

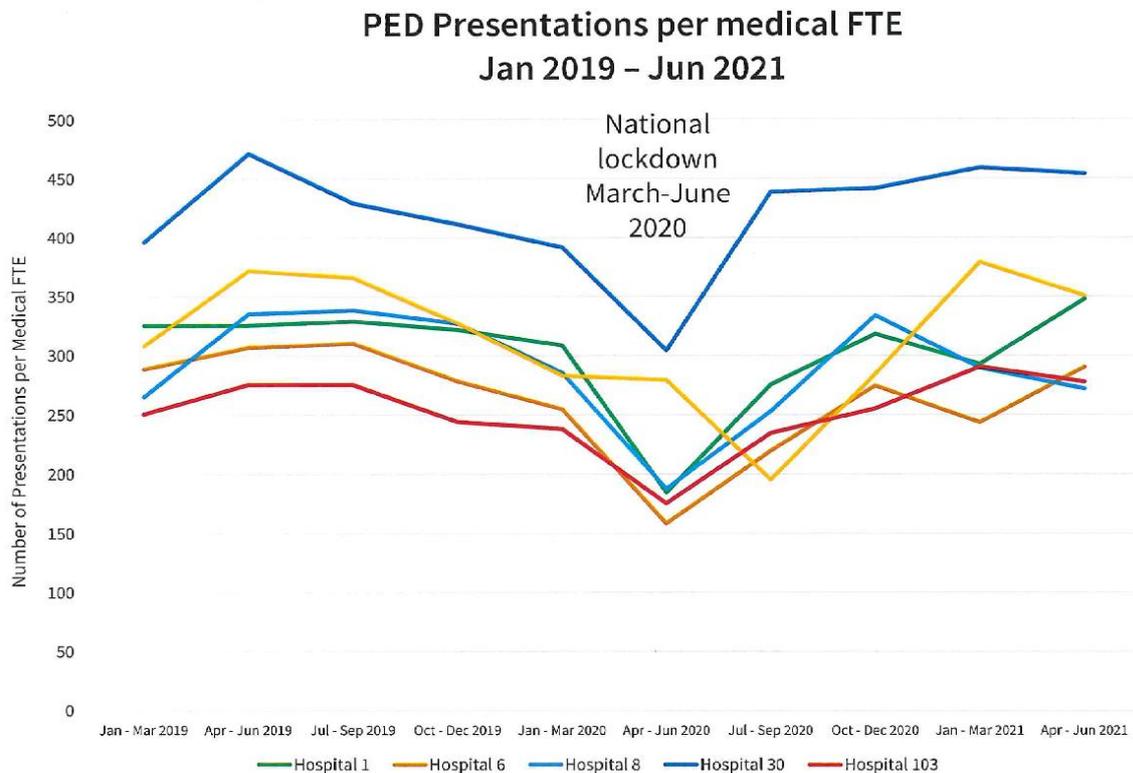
“To simply reach the activity based national average requires 10 additional doctors and 13 more treatment spaces. In other words, if this hospital was in any other State, it would have 10 additional doctors and 13 additional treatment spaces.

“The Hospital Executive have approved some temporary staffing to deal with COVID, as have all of the hospitals Australia-wide, but this is unrelated to the systemic understaffing and extreme patient risks.

“It is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the Emergency Department staff that there are not more adverse events. But the risk is high and errors do occur.

“Executive are placing all of the clinical risk on the clinicians by leaving the Department massively understaffed. Clinicians are stretched beyond their limit. Patients shouldn’t be subjected to this risk.

“The doctors in the ED have no confidence that current management understand the seriousness of the issue and call on the Board to intervene urgently on behalf of the state’s children and families before there are more adverse events and the system fails completely.”



“Hospital 30” is the Adelaide Women’s and Children’s Hospital

## Average PED Waiting Time (minutes) per presentation 1 Jan 2019 – 31 March 2021

