

The Hon Rose Jackson MLC

Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness,
Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth, Minister for the North Coast



Ref: M25/524

Mr Edward Miller
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Psychiatric Workforce in the NSW Public Health System

Dear Mr Miller

Thank you for writing about the psychiatry workforce in NSW.

I want to acknowledge and express deep appreciation for the dedication and hard work of psychiatrists across the state. Their commitment to providing care for individuals with complex and serious mental health conditions, often under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, is invaluable. In response to workforce challenges, NSW Health has undertaken significant steps to address concerns and improve the sustainability of mental health services.

As the circumstances change rapidly, the information provided in this letter is current at 10 February 2025

As part of negotiations, in May 2024, NSW Health offered the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation (ASMOF) a 10.5% increase to remuneration over 3 years. This is the largest wage increase offered to psychiatry staff specialists since 2017.

In addition to the salary increase, NSW Health also proposed to trial productivity measures that could further enhance remuneration if successful. The trial would also aim to deliver better outcomes for the health system and patients and maximise the effectiveness of our current psychiatry staff specialists.

Regrettably, the above offer and pilot have been rejected by ASMOF, and the demand for a 25% pay increase, which equates up to approximately \$88,000 per person, continues to be pursued.

The matter was called upon by the Industrial Relations Commission on 21 January 2025 where NSW Health agreed to an arbitration which will provide an expedited outcome for psychiatrists.

This arbitration, set down to begin on 17 March 2025, will allow ASMOF to present its case for a pay increase to the independent umpire, the Commission. The Commission will decide on a fair and reasonable pay rise, accounting for all evidence that ASMOF and the Government present. The Government is legally required to pay what the Commission determines.

The NSW Government has also been actively engaging with ASMOF, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), and the Australian Medical Association (AMA) since early 2024 to address non-award issues affecting workplace satisfaction.

These consultations led to the development of the Psychiatry Workforce Action Plan, with implementation already underway on most actions.

Work will begin this year on a new 5-year Psychiatry Workforce Plan, to deliver long-term solutions to the systemic challenges facing the sector.

We want to reassure the community that every effort is being made to minimise any impact this may have on their care. NSW Health remains committed to working to support a solution in the best interests of the people of NSW and psychiatrists. We will continue to keep the community informed of potential impacts to our health services.

Thank you again for writing. For more information, please contact Dr Justine Harris, Chief Medical Workforce Advisor, Workforce Planning and Talent Development Branch, NSW Ministry of Health, at justine.harris@health.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rose Jackson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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