

NSW Medical Staff Executive Council

2017/18 NSW MSEC Executive:
Co-Chairs : Dr Anthony Joseph and Dr Ruth Arnold
Vice Chair: Dr Kathryn Browning Carmo
Secretary: Dr Theresa Jacques
Treasurer: Dr Bruce Cooper

contact@nswmsec.com

23rd April 2018

Ms Elizabeth Koff,
Secretary for Health
NSW Health

Dear Ms Koff,

The Westmead MSC has brought to the attention of NSW MSEC the issue of office space for Staff Specialists in their redevelopment. There was previously a minimum requirement for office space for Staff Specialists covered by PD2005_576 which has been rescinded by NSW Health without prior notice or discussion. The broader state-wide implications by rescinding this policy directive on workplace function, clinical and service needs as well as the impact on Staff Specialist morale do not appear to have been considered. The new plans for the Westmead Hospital Redevelopment include only shared workspaces in open plan areas which is most unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. The Westmead MSC has indicated that the industrial aspects of these decisions will be taken to the Industrial Relations Commission by ASMOF.

NSW MSEC find this a concerning development for all Staff Specialists across NSW with implications for both clinical service delivery and staff morale for the following reasons:

1. Lack of privacy of open plan office spaces for private phone conversations about clinical matters or confidential discussions with other staff members. As a result there will be a risk to the individual and to the organisation regarding breeches of confidentiality.
2. Noise levels in open plan spaces may contribute to loss of productivity.
3. Influenza outbreaks may spread more readily between staff sharing open office spaces.
4. Potential wasted time and decreased productivity in repeatedly packing up work to vacate a shared "hot desk" space when leaving for a few hours to conduct clinics/attend meetings.
5. Unrealistic workflow expectation that Staff Specialists can pack up and carry their computer and notes (most facilities are far from completely paperless) with them in vacating their hot desk in order to attend ward rounds, clinics and meetings.
6. The implementation of such a change demonstrates a significant sense of lack of value and disregard for senior Staff Specialists who have, until now, been allocated a private space for their work. This change in the policy directive by NSW Health sends a message that the contribution of senior clinicians to the NSW Health system is not valued. This has occurred on a background of already very poor staff scores for "sense of value" by NSW Health in public surveys such as "People matter".
7. Senior Nursing staff and administrative staff within NSW Health are not expected to universally adopt the same model of "hot desks" in shared open areas.

There are Australasian Health Facility Guidelines (AHFG) in place that describe some minimum requirements by department/unit for office space and quiet space for patient and family conferences to meet clinical needs. These guidelines still link with requirements based on role delineation, size of unit and describe consultation processes required to respectfully include staff in planning in order to meet needs for staff wellbeing. We would ask you to reconsider the act of rescinding the NSW Health PD for Staff Specialist Accommodation without further analysis and discussion with Stakeholders. NSW Health risks non-compliance with Australian standards set out in the AHFG, by rescinding PD2005_576 without detailed consultation.

We ask that you direct the Western Sydney LHD Chief Executive to explore further options with the Westmead Hospital Medical Staff Council regarding the allocation of office space in the new hospital Redevelopment and NSW MSEC would be happy to be involved in those discussions if required.

A compromise that would meet clinical and service needs may include options such as:

- Office/consult spaces for each department
- Shared but private and lockable office and desk space allocated for each department to enable clinically private conversations
- The ability to leave paperwork and belongings in a safe setting whilst conducting clinics.
- Provision of specific office space for Staff Specialists with Head of Department or other administrative roles.

We would appreciate a teleconference time to discuss this issue and its broader implications for Senior medical Staff workplace conditions and morale across NSW further.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Ruth Arnold and Dr Anthony Joseph
Co-Chairs NSW MSEC

Cc Westmead MSC
ASMOF