

17 June 2026

Ms Kara Thomas
President – Nurses Professional Association of Australia
Suite 14-18, 17 Bowen Bridge Road
Bowen Hills Qld 4006

Email: Kara.thomas@npaaservices.org.au

Dear Ms Thomas,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 3 June 2026 regarding patient safety and operational pressures at Townsville University Hospital (TUH).

We acknowledge the professionalism and commitment of our nursing and midwifery workforce, who consistently deliver high-quality care in a complex and high-demand environment.

In response to the specific matters raised by the Nurses Professional Association of Australia (NPAA), Townsville Hospital and Health Service (THHS) provides the following information:

Theatre equipment

TUH has an established asset replacement program in place to systematically replace end-of-life theatre equipment, including theatre tables, in line with clinical risk and service priority.

PACU capacity and theatre cancellations

Escalation protocols are in place to manage PACU capacity, including case prioritisation and flow management. A review of PACU processes and discharge flow is underway to identify opportunities to reduce bed block.

Theatre cancellations

Targeted initiatives are currently being implemented to reduce cancellation rates, including reinstatement of wellness checks, expansion of anaesthetic clinic capacity, and standardisation of preadmission processes.

Discharge planning

Our teams work to collectively contribute to discharge planning for families and patients every day. Discharge planning activities form the foundation of many roles of

clinicians irrespective of setting, and disaggregating the exact components of roles involved in discharge planning is beyond the scope of this response.

The THHS confirms that, in addition to inpatient care teams, the following resources are also in place to support clinicians, patients and families (this is a non-exhaustive list):

- A dedicated social work team across multiple settings who support families to navigate social and legal barriers to discharge.
- Resources specifically geared to assisting patients transition to residential aged care.
- Resources specifically focused on coordinating discharge into the NDIS.
- Allied health team members who work primarily on reablement of patients to discharge home and providing novel solutions to manage functioning in the community dwelling population.
- A partnership with the Office of the Public Guardian to expedite guardianship decisions to prevent delays.
- A Veterans Liaison Officer function which navigates eligible patients into services and assists with discharge activities.
- An acute discharge coordination team, assisting teams across the TUH with transitioning patients into services.
- A team of discharge coordinators, who assist to reconnect patients into existing programs.

The THHS continues to advocate for additional State and Commonwealth support to address systemic discharge barriers, and has strong inter-agency links, and channels through to Policy and Program areas of Queensland Health.

The THHS has recently commenced a partnership with the NQPHN to assist families of patients who have dementia, to transition out of the hospital environment to either residential aged care, or to be cared for with support in people's homes.

Staffing

The Nursing and Midwifery Staffing Team (NMST) currently has a casual workforce (casual pool) of 413 employees which are utilised alongside our permanent staff team (pool) of 312 employees to cover unplanned leave. This substantially reduces reliance on overtime. Townsville University Hospital (TUH) maintains an ongoing and proactive recruitment strategy to attract both casual, temporary, and permanent nurses and midwives, with recruitment occurring consistently at national and international levels to support workforce sustainability. In addition, THHS retains access to agency staffing where required, to ensure continuity of safe and appropriate service delivery during periods of workforce shortage or increased demand.

Outpatient and antenatal access

Outpatient waitlists are monitored weekly through established governance processes. While demand exceeds capacity in some specialties, an outpatient improvement project is underway to optimise access and efficiency. TUH imaging services are utilised, and patients are not expected to incur inappropriate out-of-pocket costs.

Activity-based funding ED targets

TUH recognises the concerns raised regarding ED performance targets and supports ongoing system-level discussion regarding the impact of activity-based funding measures on patient flow and workforce pressures.

Hospital expansion

The TUH expansion remains a key priority under the Queensland Government's Hospital Rescue Plan. The redevelopment is being delivered through a staged program of works, with Stage 1A funded and currently progressing through design and procurement activities.

Stage 1A includes expansion of the North Block, development of a new Eastern Campus and delivery of interim surgical capacity. Collectively, these initiatives will increase capacity at TUH through the delivery of an additional 165 overnight beds and expanded surgical services.

Subject to completion of procurement and governance approval processes, the first new overnight bed capacity is expected to become available from 2029. Additional surgical and rehabilitation capacity is planned through Stage 1B, with the first new theatre capacity expected in the early 2030s.

While the permanent expansion is being delivered, THHS continues to implement a range of measures to manage demand and maintain safe, high-quality patient care. These measures include capacity optimisation initiatives, demand management strategies and the ongoing refurbishment and reconfiguration of existing clinical spaces.

State and federal collaboration

TUH continues to work with State and Commonwealth partners to address structural drivers of bed block, including NDIS access, aged care placement, and community capacity. These challenges are system-wide and require coordinated, multi-level solutions, while TUH continues to pursue local improvements within its delegated authority.

THHS acknowledges these pressures are complex and remains actively and continuously committed to ongoing improvement and collaboration.

Yours sincerely,



Shellee Chapman

Acting Health Service Chief Executive