

Stat Report 2015/32

More scientists sacked at Latrobe Regional Hospital

The Union is alarmed that the management at Latrobe Regional Hospital seems to be unwilling to ensure the hospital is able to maintain world-class standards as senior pathology scientists are sacked. As we know pathology is used in the diagnosis of up to 80% of all cases in acute care settings, including cancer and infectious diseases.

The senior scientists have 60 years of combined experience and knowledge that will be lost to the community. The management and board at Latrobe Regional Hospital continue to fail the community by allowing Dorevitch Pathology to keep breaching their contract. And adding insult to injury, the board and management of LRH have gone along with this latest round of sackings in the face of a public review into the handling of the pathology contract at the hospital.

The only reason these scientists will be sacked is to improve Dorevitch's profits. It seems the LRH Board doesn't care that healthcare standards in the hospital will decline and that patient welfare will be compromised.

The Latrobe Valley community is going to lose three highly qualified scientists with 60 years combined experience. The real value of this knowledge and experience arises when a very sick patient arrives in the emergency department with a complex condition that needs urgent and accurate diagnosis.

With growing demand for health services in the region and the Hospital expanding with the addition of an oncology unit, it has never been more important for the hospital to have highly qualified and experienced scientists in the pathology laboratory.

It is the Hospital who is playing games with the lives of residents in Latrobe Valley as they allow senior, experienced scientists to be sacked.

The capacity of the LRH pathology laboratory to deliver pathology services at the level necessary to ensure high levels of healthcare for patients is diminished with every cut and redundancy.

The Union has been urging the Victorian Government to step in immediately to stop this demolition of LRH's pathology service. If the LRH Board won't put patient safety before Dorevitch Pathology's profits then the Government must.

St John of God and returning from maternity leave

It has come to the Union's attention that St John of God are trying to force people returning from maternity leave into signing new employment contracts that convert a permanent full time member to permanent part time contracts instead of using temporary variations. It is important to remember that when you're returning to work from maternity leave, your employer is required to

ensure you return to the substantive position you had before taking maternity leave.

It is important to note that in these circumstances you cannot be forced to sign a new employment contract which would effectively alter your employment to permanent part-time. Return to work from maternity leave arrangements should always be expressed as temporary variations to your permanent employment contracts for the return to work period only.

On top of this, SJOG is also trying to forcibly change part time contract arrangements of the staff. To be clear, your employer cannot force you to change permanent part time arrangements on returning to work from maternity leave without your agreement, and they certainly cannot sack you if you don't agree with their demands. Our agreement and the provisions of the Fair Work Act are very clear on this matter – changes can only be made with your agreement.

If you find yourself in this situation at St John of God, or any other health service, please contact the Union as soon as possible.

Public pathology petition having an impact

Over the last couple of months the Union has been running a petition to highlight the growing concerns about public pathology heading for a crisis. And in that time we have generated a lot of interest among Members of Parliament and in the broader community. Plus we now have well over 200 signatures.

This is great news.

But right now we need to step up our efforts to get even more signatures on our petition because in early November we will be presenting our petition to Parliament.

This is our last chance to get as many signatures as we can so the Government has to hear our collective voice to end the contracting out of pathology services; and ensure local public hospitals have fully functioning pathology laboratories staffed with a sufficient number of properly qualified staff.

[Download the petition and get your colleagues to sign it. Get your completed petitions to us by 30 October.](#)

If you've already signed the petition you can keep making a difference by getting your colleagues and co-workers to sign the petition too.



Climate change is Union business

Climate change is one of the most pressing economic, social and environmental challenges we face, and Australians will be hit hard if we do not respond with urgent and decisive action to reduce pollution, improve energy efficiency and support the transition to a low carbon economy.

The Paris Summit is turning the world's attention to climate change once again. It is an important time to reflect on the unity across Australian society in the demand for a planned and just transition to a fair and clean economy.

Unions have been working hard at both national and international levels to develop real, workable and equitable solutions to this major problem. And Unions are determined that adjusting to a low pollution economy must focus on support for emission-intensive and trade-exposed industries, measures to protect existing jobs, programs to attract investment in clean energy and production, and assistance to low income households.

Some industries and regional economies will be impacted more acutely than others. It is imperative that these communities are assisted to successfully adapt their industries and build new ones to ensure decent living standards, job opportunities and services continue to thrive in these areas. We must start identifying and prioritising the green skills development, knowledge and work needed for a low pollution economy.

And working in the health industry we are already seeing the impacts of climate change with more extreme weather events. We know that people's health will be impacted with longer periods of hot weather; and as some tropical diseases reach further south. We're already seeing people under great mental strain as a result of climate change; and a generation of young people dealing with stress and anxiety about their future.

Because climate change is union business, the Union has endorsed and is supporting the People's Climate March.

People's Climate March – Melbourne

The People's Climate March will be held across Australia on 27-29 November.

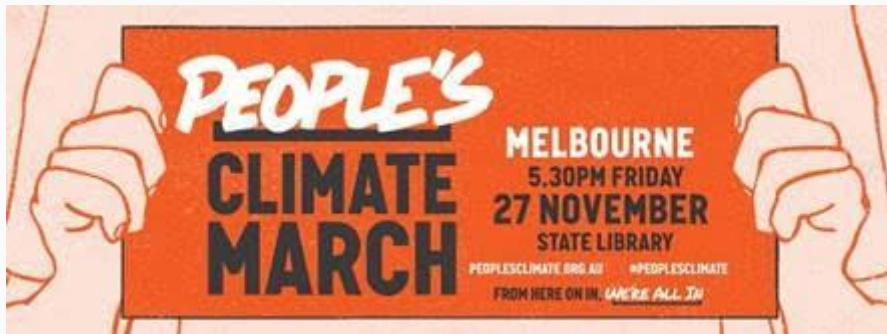
Over that weekend, People's Climate Marches will take place in hundreds of major cities around the world with the goal of creating a massive mobilisation to call for real action on climate change. And it comes at a crucial time when the world's leaders and diplomats are in Paris to negotiate the kind of cuts and assistance required to make deep cuts in our emissions.

The Melbourne march will be at 5.30pm on Friday 27 November.

A coalition of unions, environmental and other organisations is being built to facilitate the march.

Make sure you join our contingent to help send a message to Australian and the world's leaders that we want and must take urgent action to avoid a global climate catastrophe.

Get more information at: <http://www.peoplesclimate.org.au/>



By-elections in South-West Coast and Polwarth Districts

The Union is urging voters in the South-West Coast and Polwarth districts to use their vote to back public healthcare when they vote in their respective by-elections on 31 October.

Earlier this year the Union raised serious concerns about South West Healthcare being able to continue offering world class healthcare in light of contracts being awarded to Dorevitch Pathology, and the subsequent announcement that pathology scientists would be sacked and those that remained would be paid 25% less than before the new contract was signed.

And with such cuts we know that this will have a negative impact on the ability of the South West Healthcare to deliver the world-class healthcare residents in the area expect. It simply is not possible to declare that health standards won't be affected when vital testing is moved to Melbourne.

It has never been more important for people to fight for our public health system and for their local health services. That's why the Union is urging voters in the South-West Coast and Polwarth districts to vote for public healthcare.

Worth Reading: Could ancient textbooks be the source of the next medical breakthrough?

"The discovery that won the latest Nobel Prize for Medicine wouldn't have been much of a revelation to doctors in ancient China. Pharmaceutical chemist Tu Youyou established that the compound artemisinin could treat malaria in the early 1970s. But the plant the chemical comes from, *Artemisia annua* L. (sweet wormwood), was used to treat fevers perhaps caused by malaria as early as the third or fourth century CE.

Tu discovered the properties of artemisinin (qinghaosu in Chinese) after reading traditional Chinese texts that dated to this era listing medicinal herb preparations. The route to the discovery and its dissemination was not easy due to both the difficulties of trawling through and testing hundreds of plant samples and the political climate in China in the 70s. Fortunately, persistence paid off and artemisinin is now a key antimalarial drug."

Read the entire article by Laurence Totelin in The Conversation at:

<https://theconversation.com/could-ancient-textbooks-be-the-source-of-the-next-medical-breakthrough-48612>

Worth Reading: Blame it on biology: how explanations of mental illness influence treatment

"Every mental health problem has a biological dimension. How could it not? All our experience and behaviour, normal or abnormal, is founded on our neurobiology.

Researchers have taken great strides towards understanding these foundations and the public has taken note. Increasingly, we explain our problems as products of heredity, brain disease and chemical imbalance, rather than life experiences, adversities and ways of thinking.

Regrettably, these scientific advances have a dark side. As a recent review shows, people who hold biogenetic (biological and genetic) explanations of mental health disorders tend to have some negative perceptions of those who experience them. They view these people as relatively dangerous, unpredictable and unlikely to recover, and seek greater distance from them."

Read the entire article by Nick Haslam in The Conversation at:

<https://theconversation.com/blame-it-on-biology-how-explanations-of-mental-illness-influence-treatment-48578>

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<http://www.memberconnect.com.au/> or you can call Australian Unions Member Benefits on 1300 362 223.

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Get the most out of the Union's website

You might have noticed that the Union has a new website. The new website has a number of special features for members. These features like the Members section and the Forums, require you to have a log-in and password.

But to ensure that your privacy is protected we have created the website in such a way that you will need a separate log-in and password for the Members section and the Forums section. It might seem to be inconvenient but it does better protect you and your private information. It also means that we can be more certain about the source of a hack if such an event is ever to arise.

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