

HSUWA COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

Response of the HSUWA Committee of Management to the Second Offer to replace the *HSUWA Union Agreement* made on 20 August 2024 by the Department of Health.

IN SHORT:

- Second Offer rejected.
- Wages – offered 12% over 3 years (HSUWA claimed 12% over 2 years) which does not restore real wages lost nor reduce cost of living pressures.
- Conditions – HSUWA submitted 20 claims to improve conditions. The State Government has not fully agreed to any, has partially agreed to 12 claims (most are either low or no cost claims) and has failed to respond to 8 claims.

AS THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT, WE:

1. Call on the State Government to properly support the largest public health workforce by responding with a serious Third Offer, that reflects their public rhetoric of supporting quality public health care in Western Australia.
2. Ask for all Members to get involved in union activity in the coming weeks to ensure our voices for change are heard loud and clear and there is a serious Third Offer for HSUWA Members to consider.
3. Call on all workers covered by this Agreement who aren't Members yet, to stand with us and win for a better deal for all – by joining HSUWA today.

IN FURTHER DETAIL:

SECOND OFFER REJECTED

The Second Offer to HSUWA Members has been unanimously rejected by the Committee of Management.

WAGES

After supporting the State Government with budget repair, serious cost of living pressures over the past four years has seen our Member's living standards go backwards. At the same time, the State Government has enjoyed significant budget surpluses without taking steps to improve revenue.

The improved pay offer of 5% (from 4.75%) in the first year, and 4% (from 3.5%) in the second year) is welcomed. While this should just keep up with cost-of-living pressures, given Perth CPI was 4.6% in the 12 months to June 2024 and has averaged over 5% per year over the past four years, it does not restore lost real wages nor does it reflect the value of HSUWA member's work now or their efforts through the pandemic.

In addition, an offer of 3% in a proposed third year, when inflation is not expected to return to the 2–3% band by the Reserve Bank until at least the end of 2026 means that HSUWA member's wages would likely again fall behind inflation rates. This is before the consideration that Perth CPI has, and continues to, track higher than the national index. A 3% wages offer that risks the real danger of falling behind Perth CPI again, is

not an acceptable proposition for the largest public health workforce.

CONDITIONS

The Second Offer, (like the First Offer), does not take up the opportunity provided by HSUWA Member claims, to better support this key workforce by improving conditions. We appreciate there have been improvements to items in the First Offer and the welcome addition of the pro-rata access to Long Service Leave after 7 years and a 12-month long Security Officer forum.

A further improvement in access to an additional week of annual leave for shift workers is welcome but the toll of shift work across afternoons, nights and Saturdays remains unrecognised, as does the claim for the night shift penalty increase. A range of non-cost or low-cost items under the claim themes of work hours, safer workplace and stronger workforce are still inexplicably ignored in the Second Offer. Overall HSUWA Members have not had any response to eight claim items of a concise list of 20 claims (plus pay) submitted in November 2023 and presented by Members in February 2024.

Additional professional development leave for health professionals is unchanged from the improvement to four days per year (from two) in the First Offer. An allowance is still needed to support the costs involved as well as expanding access to professional development leave for all Members across the workforce. This lack of support, alongside no support for achieving higher qualifications, is out of step with both employer and State Government rhetoric about supporting professional development and excellence, and inequitable compared to other sectors of the health workforce.

Finally, overdue workforce reform measures that provide clear and improved career paths for Allied Health Professionals and Anaesthetic Technicians still need to be delivered in this Agreement. Anaesthetic Technicians Members are determined to win their claim – to right long-standing inequity and properly support a critical workforce.

For Allied Health Professionals, relying on delay and reclassification for less than a fifth of the workforce in 3 or 4 years, rather than committing to strategic reform is extraordinary, given the findings of the Interim Report of the Independent Review – Career Pathways for Health Professionals. In addition, the messaging of needing to wait for the outcomes of a Final Report is disingenuous. The contract for the reviewer was for 12 months to June 2024, before being purposefully extended to delay the outcome of the Final Report, until sometime in late 2024. If there is an alternative reasonable explanation for this 6-month delay, we would be happy to hear it.

Choosing to forego career pathways reform, strongly evidenced to be needed, for the public health workforce in short supply and critical to sustainable health care, is difficult to comprehend and will impact patient care.

For further detail on each claim, offer and response (or lack thereof) please see the HSUWA Comparison Table – Claim and Offers.

In unity



Committee of Management

30 August 2024

WE STAND UP! FOR HIGHER WAGES + FOR BETTER CONDITIONS