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Caring Together: Fast-tracking emergency care

More nurses will be appointed in metropolitan and major regional emergency departments in NSW public hospitals to improve and fast-track patient care.

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, said 30 new Clinical Initiative Nurses will improve communication with patients and their families in the waiting room.

“The \$14.8 million initiative over four years is part of the NSW Government’s *Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for NSW*, which was developed in response to the Garling Report,” the Minister said.

“Clinical Initiative Nurses currently operate in a number of hospital emergency departments and have proved very successful.

“They can organise an x-ray so the results are available when the patient is seen by a doctor, and organise pain relief or a reassessment of priority for a patient if their condition changes while waiting.

“The result is a reduction in waiting times for patients in the Emergency Department.

“Following the success of these nurses, we are rolling out more positions across the State to ensure patients are able to get treatment started with minimal delays, and are also kept informed and comfortable while waiting for further treatment and review.

“In addition, new protocols will fast-track patients from the Emergency Department into the wards,” the Minister said.

“One of the biggest challenges faced by our public hospitals is the increasing number of people requiring admission.

“This is especially the case among elderly patients with chronic, complex diseases and the large number of younger adults, often with conditions that were previously treated by general practitioners.

“Garling has recommended that when a patient has been assessed as ready for admission, the medical officer in charge of the Emergency Department should be able to arrange it.

“Traditionally, a patient cannot be taken to a hospital ward until a specialist has accepted the patient into their care and responsibility.

“A number of hospitals have developed local protocols and they are working well – it is now time to expand this arrangement,” he said.

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“The Australian Medical Association (NSW), the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation and the Emergency Care Taskforce are now working to make these improvements a reality,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“This initiative is being driven by the clinicians themselves and I thank them for their innovative and productive approach.

“There is tremendous cooperation among these professional groups and a determination to ensure as a state we achieve consistency with each hospital agreeing its protocols so this improvement can be implemented smoothly and safely.

“The focus of the *Caring Together* action plan is to promote a culture in hospitals where the care and treatment of the patient is at the centre of everything we do.

“As the Garling Report points out, NSW has one of the better public health care systems in the developed world but we need to meet the challenges of the future, including a growing and ageing population.

“The strategies being announced today are the result of extensive consultation across the State and from working closely with doctors, nurses and other health staff.

“These initiatives are only the beginning of important changes to continue to deliver the best possible health care and to ensure on-going patient care and safety.

“The full details of the *Caring Together* initiative will be announced next week,” the Minister added.

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