
Having failed to reach agreement with the Australian Nurses Federation (ANF), the OCPE opted to re-submit its rejected offer in a direct ballot of public sector nurses which opened on the 29th of December last year and closes at 5pm today.

“I’m certain the OCPE’s offer to public sector nurses will be rejected by a decisive majority,” says Dr Richard Lim, Opposition Health Spokesperson.

“The reason is quite simple – the OPCE’s offer of a meagre 3% wage increase per annum is simply an insult to our nurses and shows that the Northern Territory Government doesn’t value them properly.

“With inflation in the Territory scooting along at 4.9% under the management of Treasurer Syd Stirling, the Martin Government expects nurses to take, what in effect, amounts to a pay cut.

“That’s why it was overwhelmingly rejected by nurses at workplace meetings last year.

“And that’s also why the nurses I’ve spoken to since the direct ballot was announced will be voting against it.

“The OPCE’s tactics wouldn’t be so critical if it wasn’t for the chronic and growing shortage of nurses in our public hospitals which have led to nurses working many hours over-time and double shifts. And nurse fatigue will lead to clinical mistakes for patients.

“By failing to recognise the reality that its offer is well short of what is fair, the OPCE is exacerbating the recruitment and retention problems that are plaguing Territory Health.

“Ironically the OPCE’s decision to opt for a direct ballot will probably weaken its bargaining position with the ANF.

“A resounding rejection of its meagre offer will leave it with nowhere to go when it is forced to renew negotiations with the ANF.

“I’m hopeful that after Monday’s count the OPCE will enter into more realistic negotiations with the Territory’s nurses.”

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