Claim Wyong hospital opened prematurely

Wyong Hospital at Kanwal was opened prematurely, without adequate medical staff, for political expediency.

This claim has been made by members of the Resident Medical Officers' Association at Gosford District Hospital.

Dr Marie Nelson, acting as spokesman for the doctors, said the hospital had been opened despite the fact that the necessary staff could not be recruited in time.

The result had been in extension of the hours of the staff at Gosford District Hospital even though they were already working up to 32 hours every second weekend.

One resident medical officer had worked alone at Wyong for 48 hours straight with only a 24 hour warning of the shift, Dr Nelson said.

Dr Nelson pointed out that the new Wyong Hospital had been built over a period of two years and was designed to serve a fast growing population, adjacent to a busy stretch of the Pacific Highway.

The staff required for the new facility are drawn from staff at Gosford District Hospital.

"Despite the fact that the casualty department was expected to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, only one resident was specifically employed to staff that potentially very busy area at the time of opening," she said.

Dr Nelson also pointed out that there were no resident medical staff as yet available to care for in-patients at Wyong.

The Medical Administration, she continued, had been well aware increased staff would be required for Wyong and had made substantial efforts to recruit those needed, and the RMO's criticism was meant in no way to reflect on their performance.

Unfortunately, medical staff are usually employed from January to January and at this time of the year the net may be wide but the catch scant," she added.

Dr Nelson said doctors usually accepted long hours as part and parcel of their calling but objected when their hours were so long they jeopardised the finest delivery of health care unnecessarily.

"It would appear that..."