

Entry Permit Holder Report

SafeWork SA

Application ID 21203980

Entry Permit Holder	
Full Name:	Bernadette Mulholland
Permit Number:	ET-22-03868
Union Represented:	South Australian Salaried Medical Officers Association
Worksite Entered	
Business Name:	Flinders Medical Centre Emergency Department
Industry:	Other Health
Address:	Flinders Drive Bedford Park SA 5042
Date workplace entered:	17 March 2025

I Bernadette Mulholland am of the opinion that the PCBU has contravened the WHS legislation relating to:

	Alleged Contravention	More information	Was the contravention rectified?
PCBU Alleged Contravention 1	Not maintaining safe systems of work	I was contacted and asked to attend the FMC ED at the end of the working day. There were a number of issues. The senior doctor in the Emergency Department had instructed that a patient needed to be offloaded from the ramp and assessed in FMC ED. The patient was triaged as a Cat 2. This request was not followed and the patient went into cardiac arrest and was rushed in from the ramp by the paramedics approximately two hours later whilst on the ramp. The ED was in Code Yellow, there were no beds and	No

		there were 5 Cat 2s on the ramp, there was no space in the ED including the flex space. (Copy of the SLS attached).	
PCBU Alleged Contravention 2	Not maintaining a safe work environment	On attendance I was advised that this was "a week from hell" at the FMC ED. At one stage on that day there had been 116 patients in the FMC ED but this had reduced to 96. I was told there are 69 beds in the ED including EECU. There were 5 cat 2's on the ramp. (Cat 2 patients need to be seen in 10 minutes) I was advised that the "The level of stress is horrendous". The FMC ED was in Code Yellow and was advised the PCBU had provided no advice to the ED how it was de-escalating the pressure on the ED. I was told one PCBU came onto the ED floor looking for the Head of Unit and senior doctors to see what the doctors could do. The response from the workers to the PCBU was "what good is that we can't create the beds". There was no space in the ED. I was told that the 6 flex beds used to bring in patients off the ramp was full.	No
PCBU Alleged Contravention 3	Not maintaining a safe work environment	I was told that there were very sick patients in the ED waiting room that could not come in to the ED. I was told be a doctor, "I am very stressed about the environment I am working in, this is really unnecessary and is dangerous to our staff and patients. I was told that many patients in the FMC ED were witing at least 4 hours. I was told that "the morning ED crew (staff) were pretty broken" I was told that the PCBU did not respond or provide any solutions to the staff in the ED. I was told on arrival there was a medical patient in the FMC ED waiting 46 hours for a bed. The longest mental health patient had then been waiting the FMC ED for 41 hours. I was told this was a replica of last year at this time last year the hospital was in Code Yellow and nothing has changed or been implemented by the PCBU to ensure a safe working environment in the PCBU ED.	No

PCBU Alleged Contravention 4	Not maintaining a safe work environment	I had previously entered the FMC ED and Mental Short Stay Unit on 23 February 2025 to talk to psychiatrists working in both these issues still have not been addressed. When I attended the FMC ED on 17 March 2025 I was told "mental health patients not moving at all" and there were 14 mental health patients in the FMC ED waiting for a bed. The FMC ED doctors advised the increase of mental health patients has only been a recent problem in the last 12 months with increasing number of very sick mental health patients stuck in the ED. I was told mental health patients had received good access to beds but this is now broken. There continues to be ongoing mental health patients held in the ED waiting for a bed in the mental health acute ward.	No
PCBU Alleged Contravention 5	Not maintaining safe systems of work	I was advised there were enough senior doctors on the shift however the trainee doctors who had been promised the employment of more senior trainee doctors in the FMC ED which had not occurred. I was advised that the PCBU had "promised the world" to the trainee doctors in the FMC ED but had failed to recruit more senior trainee doctors. I was advised that the shortages of nursing staff was "dire" particularly specials	No
PCBU Alleged Contravention 6	Not maintaining a safe work environment	I was told that the ED environment and the hospital was "really, really bad" and the "system was broken". I was told that there were three patients in the FMC ED air lock all Cat 2s brought off the ramp, one with a ruptured appendix, one with anaphylaxis and one with cardiac condition (not the same as above) and that there was only one bed available in the FMC ED and that a choice was required which patient was to be prioritised. I was told this was stressful and impossible. One worker referred to the whole situation as a "hot mess". The workers needed the PCBU to do something to de-escalate and reduce pressure.	No

PCBU Alleged Contravention 7	Not reporting a notifiable incident	<p>I have asked whether PCBU has notified SafeWork SA of the SAC 1 and Cardiac Arrest as per the SLS pursuant to Section 38 I have received no response from the PCBU.</p> <p>Given the circumstances this incident should have been notified by the PCBU to SafeWork SA.</p>	No
PCBU Alleged Contravention 8	Not maintaining safe systems of work	<p>I met with the PCBU delegate to understand what was being implemented regarding firstly the attached SLS. I asked why the patient with the cardiac arrest was not brought off the ramp when requested. I was told that the PCBU had reviewed the "echo" and did not think this Cat 2 was any more urgent than the others. The patient "hadn't died" as a result of the cardiac arrest. That even though the author (Senior Doctor) of the SLS had determined the incident to be a SAC 1 the PCBU was intending to downgrade this rating to a lesser rating. I asked for a copy of the SLS pursuant to Section 118. The PCBU asked whether I wanted the SLS before the PCBU was downgraded and I said yes. I requested to know why the downgrading and was advised the patient "had lived" and was well on their way to recovery and therefore not a sentinel event. I understand that a SAC 1 is not a sentinel event. I believe it to be concerning that the SLS is modified without agreement from the author</p>	No
PCBU Alleged Contravention 9	Hindering or obstructing the EPH to exercise a right while at the workplace	<p>I requested at the meeting that when available following this inspection and pursuant to S118 I receive a copy of the SLS submitted by the worker in its initial format. I was provided the attached redacted and modified copy by the PCBU which contravenes the requirements of the legislation. Due to the failure by the PCBU to provide the original SLS I have placed the matter into dispute and asked to meet with PCBU delegates next week. I do not require the details of the patient and am happy for this information to remain exempted.</p>	No

PCBU Alleged Contravention 10	Not maintaining safe systems of work	<p>I met with the PCBU delegates who also advised;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I was advised that the PCBU delegate had met with staff in the ED this was contrary to what was advised by the workers - I was advised that all beds that could be opened had been opened including in the private sector. - I was told that the PCBU had tried to hire more senior trainee doctors but had been unsuccessful. - I was advised that the PCBU delegates did not know about nursing numbers - I was advised that mental health patients were taking up 20 percent of the ED capacity and there was nothing the PCBU could do and that I was aware of the problems. - I was advised elective surgery would not be cancelled to address the pressure in the ED "as these patients needed to be cared for as well". However it would be monitored - The PCBU was undertaking meetings - Patients diverted to Naorlunga Hospital - The PCBU would be unable to deescalate the pressure on the FMC ED for some time. - The PCBU agreed to catch up with me the following day. 	No
PCBU Alleged Contravention 11	Not maintaining safe systems of work	<p>The following day there was still significant overcrowding of the FMC ED. On speaking to the workers I was advised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No extra capacity had been opened. - Rapid offload had been requested by the ramp (SOCC) on a number of occasions but there was no space in the ED and access block- we told them "we are drowning". - No one from the PCBU meeting with staff in the ED - I advised the PCBU that the FMC ED stated "mental health delays are really contributing to the block - not sure why the service has struggled of late". 	No



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The ED needed immediate action and asked the PCBU to cancel elective surgery.- Concern that the use of the Code Yello was simply an alert to highlight the health and safety issues but without solutions.	
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