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Industrial action by Ambulance officers

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, said the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW would hold an urgent hearing this evening to bring together the Ambulance Service of NSW and the Health Services Union.

“I know the Award modernisation has been a difficult transition for the paramedics,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“I am very hopeful that the Commission can help resolve this issue.

“The paramedics’ threatened action has the potential to disrupt the transfer of some patients and I sincerely hope it does not come to that.

“I am pleased that the union has given the assurance that emergency patients will not be affected.

“Should the action go ahead, hospitals will endeavour to reduce any inconvenience to patients.

“There are two areas of disagreement.

“The first is the new Award brought down by the full bench of the Industrial Relations Commission in September last year.

“The new Award contains wage increases of between 8.5 per cent and 15 per cent, in addition to the 2.5 per cent sector-wide.

“At the same time, the Commission changed the complex penalty arrangements for missed meal breaks, replacing them with paid meal breaks, a simpler penalty and some more flexible rostering.

“This was the independent umpire’s decision.

“Roster changes are always difficult and the Service has undertaken to carefully work this through, station by station. Many of the changes determined by the Commission won’t be implemented for some months and will require negotiation.

“This is being overseen by the Industrial Relations Commission,” he said.

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“On the rescue front, I share the paramedics’ disappointment that the State Rescue Board determined that it would not re-accredit metropolitan rescue crews,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“However, I understand and accept the Board’s decision and I am pleased there will be a stand-by arrangement to allow the Ambulance rescue paramedics to maintain their skills.

“I have great respect for our Ambulance paramedics and I hope these matters can be quickly resolved,” he said.

Media contact: Andrew Plumley 9228 4777 or 0438 455 562