

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE No. 2
RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO WORKFORCE ISSUES, WORKPLACE
CULTURE AND FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS FOR REMOTE, RURAL AND
REGIONAL HEALTH**

Organisation: Gunnedah Shire Council

Date Received: 4 October 2023



NSW Government – Inquiry into the implementation of Portfolio Committee No.2 recommendations relating to workforce issues, workplace culture and funding considerations for remote, rural and regional health

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2979>

4 October 2023

Dear Sir

Gunnedah Shire Council Submission

Please find this letter as Gunnedah Shire Council's submission to the 2023 Inquiry into the implementation of Portfolio Committee No.2 recommendations relating to workforce issues, workplace culture and funding considerations for remote, rural and regional health.

This submission focuses on the following terms of reference for the Inquiry;

- a) Any challenges or opportunities relating to the implementation of recommendations relating to workforce issues, workplace culture and funding considerations for remote, rural and regional health;
- b) Staffing numbers, recruitment and retention, and related workforce management and planning issues (including recommendations 8, 9, 11, 12, 16, and 33);
- c) Staff accreditation and training (including recommendations 19, 23 and 29);
- d) Workplace culture, including forthcoming reviews of workplace culture and complaint handling mechanisms (including recommendation 40); and
- e) Funding for agencies, programs and incentives (including recommendations 1 and 38).

We welcome the opportunity to provide this input to the inquiry. The Gunnedah Community, and Gunnedah Shire Council, have advocated long and hard for a new hospital. Up until 10 July 2023 we had been promised that new hospital was to be delivered.

On 15 November 2022, NSW Health Infrastructure provided a briefing to Gunnedah Shire Council on the finalisation of the master plan for the delivery of the development, which detailed the inclusions to be made in the hospital redevelopment.

Throughout the lead-up to the NSW 2023 State Election, undertakings were given by all candidates that the NSW Hospital development would be delivered. The attached correspondence from Council's Mayor outlines in more detail the frustrating and terribly disappointing circumstances around the broken promises and failure of NSW Health and the State Government to heed the recommendations of the initial Inquiry in health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote NSW, herein referred to as the First Inquiry.

The reason now provided that the hospital redevelopment detailed in November 2022 cannot be delivered is that the indicated \$53 million estimate is no longer sufficient, with Health Infrastructure advising that it is deficient by \$30 million. As per the attached correspondence from Council's Mayor to the Minister for Health and Regional Health, Council is calling on funding in the September 2023 State Budget to ensure the redevelopment can proceed as promised.

Given this context, Gunnedah Shire Council submits that there is both great challenges and opportunity relating to the failure to deliver the hospital redevelopment with respect to implementations of the recommendations from the first Inquiry.

Staffing, recruitment and retention, related workforce management and planning will all be compromised by the failure to deliver the redevelopment as promised. The current situation and drastically reduced scope of the redevelopment will significantly hamper the implementation of recommendations 8, 9, 11, 12, 16 and 33 for the benefit of the community of Gunnedah.

Conversely, the promised development would assist in:

- addressing the social determinants of health;
- reducing hospitalisations through the previously promised Community Health elements (no longer being delivered due to the re-scoping);
- assist in attraction of GP trainees under a single employer model;
- support a 10 year rural and remote medical and health workforce recruitment and retention strategy;
- assist in attracting GPs and VMOs while broader innovation and reform progresses;
- support retention and attraction of midwifery staff, who are significantly challenged with the current facilities in addition to the current hospital needing to refer the vast majority of deliveries to Tamworth;
- greatly assist in the building of an indigenous workforce in a Community comprising a 15% indigenous population, now slated to go without the promised health services so critical to the indigenous community – including new dental services, new community health facilities, and renal dialysis infusion services.

Staff accreditation and training will suffer from the re-scoped development of the hospital, with reduced facilities to enable on site training, and reduced security for those attending due to the no longer possible integration of the emergency services department with other elements (recommendation 19). Palliative Care is currently heavily under serviced within in Gunnedah, denying residents the dignity to spend their remaining time in the community they reside in and with their loved ones, (recommendation 23). The inadequacies of Gunnedah Hospital also require a great number of patient transfers to Tamworth Hospital, representing challenges for the implementation of recommendation 29.

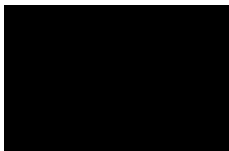
Consultation with the Community by Gunnedah Shire Council in the context of the First Inquiry revealed some significant cultural issues with respect to the Gunnedah Hospital, Health NSW and allied health services which alarmingly resulted in people feeling that they could not be named when providing information to Council's Mayor and staff. People advised that they were fearful of repercussions of raising concerns with the existing state of health services and facilities. Much of the feedback was obtained on the condition of anonymity. This speaks greatly to the need for implementation of all aspects of recommendation 40. Unfortunately the opacity, bureaucracy of Health NSW and political machinations are still making it extremely difficult, if not impossible to get answers to the five (5) questions Gunnedah Shire Council has asked and communicated in the Mayor's letter dated 20 July 2023; which remains unanswered.

It is clear that greater funding is desperately required to enable recommendations 1 and 38 of the First Inquiry to be implemented. The failure to deliver a new hospital for Gunnedah, let alone the master plan presented to the community for a promised redeveloped Gunnedah Hospital also represents an abysmal failure in the implementation of these two (2) recommendations.

It is with hope that this Inquiry may redress the failure of Health NSW and the State Government to deliver for the Gunnedah Community as detailed above, and that rural and regional health realizes the opportunities afforded in the recommendations of the First Inquiry, that this submission is made.

Any questions please don't hesitate to contact Council on 02 6740 2100.

Yours faithfully



Eric Groth
GENERAL MANAGER

Contact: 02 6740 2100

Reference: 2087740

eg:tm



Jamie Chaffey | Mayor

PO Box 63 (63 Elgin Street)

Gunnedah NSW 2380

T +61 2 6740 2100

E council@infogunnedah.com.au

www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au

GunnedahShire
Open New Horizons



The Hon. Ryan Park, MP
NSW Minister for Health and Minister for Regional Health
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001
keira@parliament.nsw.gov.au

11 July 2023

Dear Minister

Gunnedah Hospital revision to scope and design

Minister, I write to you today to express my utter disbelief the NSW Labor will be breaking a promise only 107 days after the March 25 election. On behalf of the community of Gunnedah I request your intervention to stop the current course of action to cut the planned Gunnedah Hospital redevelopment to a fraction of what was promised to the Gunnedah community.

During the State election campaign on numerous occasions NSW Labor publicly committed to bipartisan support on the delivery of the New Gunnedah Hospital Redevelopment I, and the Council of Gunnedah Shire, were devastated yesterday afternoon to hear for the first time in a presentation from NSW Health that there has been a significant reduction in scope and design for the project. This is despite a presentation from NSW Health heralding the Gunnedah Hospital Redevelopment at a Council briefing on Tuesday 15th November 2022.

The revised scope and design has left the Council reeling in both shock and disappointment. The differences between the scope presented in November 2022 and that advised today are so vast that they require lengthy description. The headline for the new scope is a new acute service building to host a new emergency department, new maternity, birthing and inpatient unit. Also listed is a refurbished entry. Community Health is advised to stay in a Rural Health Centre, which was to be a temporary measure under a short term and conditional lease from the Commonwealth.



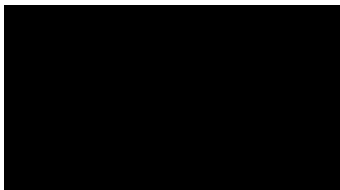
At a glance, items missing from the revised scope, which were previously included in November 2022, includes: promised infusion unit to provide much needed renal dialysis and oncology services; new theatre and day surgery; new medical imaging connected to emergency; new entry; new back of house; new plant room; new community health, dental and gym; new front of house; and a significantly new landscape and the previously much lauded application of modern health design principles. There was also a commitment to 48 beds, and no less than currently provided, yet the current scope makes no mention of bed numbers.

To be advised that the original master plan would only be delivered if new funding appeared or someone won the lottery only added insult to injury. Whilst the communication of this terrible news for our community may just be an errand for the consultant and NSW Health communications team, it is literally a matter of life and death and the ongoing health of our community that is at stake for us. The Inquiry into Health Outcomes and access to Health and Hospital Services in Rural, Regional and Remote NSW seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

A decent hospital and reliable health system is also essential to attract the much needed workforce to take Gunnedah forward into the future and retain the people we have. As stated in my letter seeking your support last year, Council and the community as whole have concerns for the ongoing health and safety of our residents and the hospital workforce, and we implore your honoring of your commitment to this much needed purpose built infrastructure that will deliver the health outcomes for generations to come.

I seek the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest opportunity to represent our concerns in person.

Yours faithfully



Councillor Jamie Chaffey
MAYOR

Contact: [REDACTED]
Reference: jc:tm

Cc: The Hon. Bronnie Taylor MLC
Officeof.MLCTaylor@parliament.nsw.gov.au

The Hon. Kevin Anderson MP
tamworth@parliament.nsw.gov.au





Jamie Chaffey | Mayor

PO Box 63 (63 Elgin Street)

Gunnedah NSW 2380

T +61 2 6740 2100

E council@infogunnedah.com.au

www.gunnedah.nsw.gov.au

GunnedahShire
Open New Horizons



The Hon. Ryan Park, MP
NSW Minister for Health and Minister for Regional Health
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001
keira@parliament.nsw.gov.au

20 July 2023

Dear Minister Park

NSW Regional Health Minister Intervention

Minister, I write to you on behalf of Gunnedah Shire Council and community to inform you of the outcome of a Mayoral Minute at the July 19 Ordinary Meeting of Council that was unanimously supported by the elected members.

RESOLUTION OF SUCCESSFUL MAYORAL MINUTE:

That Council endorses a request to the NSW Regional Health Minister for transparency by providing answers to the following questions and funding to deliver the full Hospital Master Plan redevelopment:

1. *Total cost to deliver the full Gunnedah Hospital Redevelopment Master Plan as presented to Gunnedah Shire council on 15 November 2022?*
2. *Confirmation of funding spent to date on the Gunnedah Hospital Redevelopment and what has been delivered.*
3. *Confirmation of the date when it was determined that \$53 million was insufficient to deliver on the Gunnedah Hospital Redevelopment Master Plan?*
4. *Confirmation of who was advised on that date that insufficient funding was available to deliver on the Gunnedah Hospital Redevelopment Master Plan?*
5. *That the NSW Regional Health Minister commit to funding the shortfall between the remainder of the \$53 million committed and the total value of the Gunnedah Hospital Redevelopment Master Plan by allocating the funding in the September 2023 State Budget.*

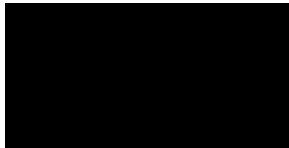


Correspondence forwarded on July 11, 2023 to your office explained in detail the concerns of the Gunnedah Shire Council and community on the broken promise by both the coalition and your Government to deliver on the full master plan of the redevelopment of the Gunnedah Hospital. At the time of writing this correspondence I have not received a response to that letter. You will recall on Monday July 17 at 5:35pm, you accepted my phone call and stated that you would have someone from your office contact me the next day to organise a date and time to meet to discuss the unacceptable re-scoping of the Gunnedah Hospital Redevelopment. Again, at the time of writing this letter I have not received any communication from your office to coordinate a date and time for that meeting.

Minister, I request that you commit to supplying answers to all questions raised in the resolution of successful Mayoral Minute and the funding required to deliver the full scope of the master plan of this development. Politics need to be put to the side and commitments need to be honored for the safety and future growth of the Gunnedah Shire residents.

I have also attached a copy of the correspondence that I forwarded to your office on July 11 that gives a greater level of detail of the events between the 2019 State Election and the most recent advice from NSW Health that detailed the need to re-scope the Gunnedah Hospital Redevelopment. I once again, seek the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest opportunity to represent our concerns in person.

Yours faithfully



Councillor Jamie Chaffey
MAYOR

Contact: [REDACTED]
Reference: jc:gt

Cc: The Hon. Bronnie Taylor MLC
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