

**Submission
No 144**

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Organisation: HealthWISE

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HealthWISE
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Chair
Committee on Law and Safety
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Sydney NSW 2000

30 May 2024

Dear Mr Atalla,

Submission to Community safety in regional and rural communities inquiry

New England North West Health Ltd. (HealthWISE New England North West) is a 'for purpose' (not for profit), registered charity delivering primary care programs and clinical services across the New England and North West regions of New South Wales and the Darling Downs and West Moreton regions of Queensland.

HealthWISE is a major regional and rural provider of mental health, Aboriginal health, allied health and primary health care nursing services. Our current programs include delivery of the Indigenous Australians Health Programme, Students as LifeStyle Activists (SALSA) program in high schools, Community Based Suicide Prevention Services (Aftercare Services), Nutrition Education & Skills Training (NEST), care navigation services to the Ezidi community in Armidale, as well as health education and speech pathology services delivered in primary school settings.

The majority of HealthWISE services are provided free of cost to the client, made possible through funding from a range of government and non-government agencies, primarily, Primary Health Networks.

To pursue our purpose of healthy communities, we work with community members at every stage of life. Currently, children and families from across northern New South Wales cannot access specialist paediatric assessment and diagnostic services, and therapeutic health services including occupational therapy and speech pathology at no or low cost, in a timely manner, within a reasonable distance of their home.

Families trying to access public paediatricians in Tamworth in 2024, have been told they will be on a wait list for six years.

Rural and regional communities in northern New South Wales, including Narrabri, Moree and Tamworth have a greater percentage of children aged 0-14 in their population than



the New South Wales and Australian averages (Census 2021) yet services have not been provided to adequately support the population.

The establishment and expansion of dedicated children's health services across New South Wales, to deliver wrap around health and wellbeing services for children and young people including access to a paediatrician and therapeutic services such as mental health, speech pathology and occupational therapy, supported by a minimum of five years funding, would provide support for communities and as well as improving health and educational outcomes, contribute to the opportunity for this parliament to deliver generational change.

Strategies to support community health and safety for each region in New South Wales will be different. There will not be one approach/solution to roll out across the state. HealthWISE would be pleased to further contribute to evidence-based discussions to meet the needs of communities across our footprint.

Yours faithfully



Fiona Strang

CEO