

**Submission  
No 27**

## **HEALTH SERVICES AMENDMENT (SPLITTING OF THE HUNTER NEW ENGLAND HEALTH DISTRICT) BILL 2025**

**Organisation:** Tenterfield Shire Council

**Date Received:** 8 April 2025



**Submission by the  
Tenterfield Shire Council  
regarding the**

**NSW Health Services Amendment (Splitting of the  
Hunter New England Health District) Bill 2025**

The Tenterfield Shire Council strongly believes that the current Hunter New England Local Health District does not serve the many regional, rural and remote communities outside of the Newcastle/Hunter region adequately.

This belief is informed by the Council receiving a constant flow of complaints and concerns from community members about the deterioration in and lack of services over the past 20 years since this behemoth's establishment in 2004 – reinforced by numerous personal experiences and examples of Councillors and staff not receiving satisfactorily medical care over this period.

The Hunter New England Local Health District is by far the largest health district in NSW and covers not only a very large geographic area of 131,785 square kilometers, including 25 different local government areas and a population of nearly one million people, but also a number of diverse communities spread out over this vast area – ranging from:

- A metropolitan coastal community;
- Regional and rural coastal communities;
- Comparatively densely populated inland mining region communities; and
- Comparatively sparsely populated inland "highland" communities.

The Tenterfield Shire Council argues that the above-mentioned diversity of communities spread over such a large geographic area makes it impossible for a single health authority to adequately and effectively deliver health

services to all of the resident living in these different locations – with the core of this health district, being the John Hunter Hospital, being located within the metropolitan coastal community of Newcastle at the extreme south-eastern end of this district, seven hours drive away from Tenterfield.

Therefore, the Tenterfield Shire Council has *inter alia* adopted the following resolution at its Ordinary Meeting held on 26 March 2025:

### **Resolved**

#### **That Council:**

- (1) Notes the status of the Monthly Operational Report for February 2025.**
- (2) Provides a submission to the NSW Health Services Amendment (Splitting of the Hunter New England Health District) Bill 2025, in support of splitting the current Hunter New England Health Service Area into a Hunter Health Service Area and a New England Health Service Area, based on the following broad considerations:**
  - The Hunter New England Health District covers a very large rural geographic area whilst its management nexus and main hospital are located in Newcastle, with a lack of understanding of regional and rural communities and their particular challenges because of their geographic locations and smaller population numbers.**
  - Since the amalgamation to create the Hunter New England Health District, spanning a massive geographic area, Council has continuously received reports and experienced first-hand a deterioration in health services, hospital care, and staffing and General Practitioner numbers within rural communities throughout this large Hunter New England Health Service area, including the relevant townships within the Tenterfield Shire Council's local government area.**
  - Continuous budget cuts over a sustained period have resulted in inadequate and ineffective service delivery for rural communities like Tenterfield, with a clear disparity between the Hunter Service and the inland services.**

(Greg Sauer/Kim Rhodes)

### **Motion Carried**

It also needs to be mentioned that the Tenterfield Shire Council finds itself in the unenviable position of having its local government area split between the Hunter New England Local Health District and that of the Northern Rivers Area Health Service – complicating matters for this local government authority to effectively and efficiently communicate on behalf of its constituents. This Council has unsuccessfully advocated in 2016/17 for the western part of its local government area (including Tenterfield town) to be added to the Northern Rivers Area Health Service's area of jurisdiction.

The Tenterfield Shire Council thanks the Parliament of New South Wales for the opportunity to make this submission and appreciates its consideration of the arguments contained in the submission.