

**Submission
No 35**

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

Name: Mrs Jenny Hatton

Date Received: 13 April 2025

I support the Bill to split the Hunter New England Health District as I believe the health care of people in our area has been severely compromised since the Wee Waa Hospital restricted its hours of operation in May 2023 (8am-5.30pm daily opening hours). After two years of these restricted hours we don't appear to be any closer to opening the hospital and HNEH seem ignorant and intolerant to the needs of the Wee Waa Community and its large surrounding areas. An experience I had during these restricted operating hours at the hospital resulted in further pain to me and worry and inconvenience to my family and friends and put more pressure on Narrabri Hospital which is unable to cope with the increased patient need flowing from Wee Waa.

In July 2024 I attended the Wee Waa Medical Centre with severe lower back pain - sciatica - which I had been experiencing for a couple of weeks. I had been given morphine by my GP two weeks previously and this was the only drug that worked well with my pain. I attended the GP clinic again on the day in question and my GP decided a second morphine injection would help while I waited for a specialist appointment. As he gave me the injection late in the afternoon he wanted me monitored for the night in case of an adverse reaction. Obviously, this was not possible at Wee Waa Hospital as it closed at 5.30pm. As I live by myself, the GP arranged for me to go to my brother's farm that night so I could be monitored. Later in the evening I became very nauseous with disorientation, pain and weakness. After several calls to Narrabri Hospital, my brother called an ambulance and I was taken to Narrabri Hospital emergency department. The staff were busy that night and I was assessed and initially I was to be admitted to hospital until staff discovered there were no beds available. I was kept in Emergency for a couple of hours and made several attempts at leaving, but was too weak to walk. In the end I was taken to a family member's car in a wheelchair close to midnight. Luckily, I had a family member living in Narrabri and was able to stay with them for the night. The treatment and the staff at Narrabri Hospital were professional and caring but it was unfair for me to be discharged so late at night and for a family member to have responsibility for me for the night. I do not remember the night as I was so unwell. The facilities in Wee Waa are there. We have a medical practice that has offered to give VMO service to Wee Waa Hospital. We have nurses who would return to work if there was access to a doctor (in person, not telehealth) at the hospital. Newcastle is too far away for administrators to understand the danger and inconvenience the 'temporary' restricted hours of Wee Waa Hospital has on our community and on Narrabri and other hospitals in our network. The lack of urgency of HNEH to get our hospital opened 24/7 is unsafe. This would not happen at a town closer to Newcastle.