

**Submission
No 184**

**THE SAFETY AND QUALITY OF HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDED BY NORTHERN
BEACHES HOSPITAL**

Organisation: Save Mona Vale Hospital Community Action group

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Partially
Confidential



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Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry

The safety and quality of health services provided by Northern Beaches Hospital

The Save Mona Vale Hospital Community Action Group (SMVHC) was formed over 25 years ago to protect the health needs and entitlements of peninsula and northern beaches residents.

We consider that Healthscope's Northern Beaches Hospital (NBH) is not fulfilling its responsibilities as a healthcare provider and is failing to meet the health needs of the people of the peninsula and northern beaches.

We do not accept that Healthscope should relinquish just the public section and retain the profit-making private section.

The design of the one main building is such that separating the public and private sectors would be fraught with problems. It differs in layout to Royal North Shore Public and Private Hospitals.

Mona Vale Public Hospital was built in the 1960s in response to community health needs and the distressing numbers of DOAs (Dead on Arrivals) presenting to our then nearest public hospital, Manly Hospital, 29 kms from Palm Beach.

Over the years, successive governments have indicated an interest in the closure of the hospital. SMVHC has had to be vigilant about the protection of Mona Vale Hospital because of the very attractive real estate on which Mona Vale Hospital stood. There has been huge community support over the 25 years of action and thus the site has been saved, although the main hospital building was demolished by the previous government.

Significantly, **each side of politics, when in opposition**, held an inquiry which recognised the need for the retention of Mona Vale Hospital as a Level 4 public hospital.

In 2019, the State Labor Opposition initiated an inquiry into the operation and management of NBH. This resulted in 23 recommendations.

- The inquiry stated that "It would appear that the focus by Healthscope of profit is to the detriment of the health care received by many public and private patients."
- The model "has the potential to negatively affect people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds".
- Healthscope has a "responsibility to maximise returns to its shareholders".

Save Mona Vale Hospital has always believed that the arrangement entered into by the previous government would not work, despite the hyperbolic claims of Brad Hazzard, then Health Minister.

He has subsequently admitted privately, as we believe has Rob Stokes, our then local member, that it was not a good decision.

The State Government needs to take control of Northern Beaches Hospital not just for health security reasons but also for financial reasons.

It is audacious of Healthscope to think it can just hand over the public sector and keep the profitable private sector.

There are reports that currently the cost to the government, for Healthscope providing public beds at NBH is two to three times what it costs the government for Royal North Shore Public Hospital, with regular top-ups of funding.

In 2025, Northern Beaches Hospital is failing to consistently provide high quality health care to both public and private patients from the northern beaches. Many people now bypass NBH and go to Royal North Shore ED, thereby overloading RNSH facilities and services. People have lost confidence in NBH and are fearful of the consequences of its failure to provide consistent quality care to both private and public patients.

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█ [REDACTED]

- Others recount the many hours spent in ED waiting for attention.
- The casualisation and lack of staff continuity is confusing and often distressing. Patients speak of a lack of relationship with staff as each shift brings different staff. Patients can be asked the same questions frequently, causing confusion and a loss of confidence in the staff. On each shift, the new staff member has to be briefed on the patient's health needs.
- Cost cutting is evident in the quality of the medical equipment. E.g. the cheapest types of cannulas.

█ [REDACTED]

█ [REDACTED]

█ [REDACTED]

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We consider that Healthscope's Northern Beaches Hospital has failed to meet the health needs of both public and private patients of the northern beaches.

We believe Healthscope should relinquish the whole hospital, which should be run as a public facility because northern beaches' residents have lost two public hospitals. As a public facility, Northern Beaches Hospital should include public clinics, public pathology and imaging units, operating theatres, a youth mental health ward and a stroke unit.

The government provided funding to set up a dedicated youth mental health ward at NBH, but it has not eventuated.

A stroke unit is necessary at NBH to treat all types of strokes because timing is so critical to successful treatment. Typically, medication needs to be given within three hours of when symptoms begin. The closure of Mona Vale Hospital has resulted in a significant increase in travel time for people along the northern beaches, reviving memories of the DOAs from the 1960s. Palm Beach to NBH is 26 kms. Northern Beaches Hospital is closer to residents in Bondi Junction than those in Palm Beach. If stroke victims first attend NBH and their treatment requires transport to RNSH, significant time is lost and treatment for some people is likely to be less successful.

To allow Healthscope to continue running a private hospital at the site, even if it could be disentangled from the public hospital, would mean the public facility would not benefit from the health insurance payments made on behalf of private patients. This would reward Healthscope, allowing it to run the private hospital effectively funded by insurance companies.

To allow Healthscope to continue running a private hospital at the site, would not guarantee improved hospital stays and medical outcomes for private patients.

Planning must also commence for the rebuilding of a public hospital at Mona Vale.

Since the 1960s, the population on the northern beaches has increased significantly. with the associated increased demand for health care. Despite this, the previous government closed two accessible public hospitals and replaced them with the private Northern Beaches Hospital. Now under the NSW Government Low and Medium Rise changes, approximately 8,000 more residents are planned for Mona Vale.

An acute Mona Vale Hospital will become even more essential as the population on the northern beaches increases.

Yours faithfully
Sue Martin OAM
Secretary
Save Mona Vale Hospital



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