

**Submission
No 104**

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

Organisation: New England Division of General Practice

Date Received: 12 June 2025

Chair: Dr Alexandra Draney
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12 June 2025

Dear Mr Barr and Colleagues,

Thankyou for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry regarding the Health Services Amendment (Splitting of the Hunter New England Health District) Bill 2025. We write on behalf of the members of the New England Division of General Practice, a member organisation of the 75+ GPs working in the towns of Tenterfield, Glen Innes, Guyra, Inverell, Armidale, and covering the population of Emmaville, Tingha and Ashford.

In order to write this report, we canvassed all our GP members for their opinion. The main concerns with the proposal were the lack of clarity of alternative options. GPs still need a large tertiary hospital to refer patients to, and Newcastle is the closest location for most of our region. GPs were concerned about the potential duplication of services with additional administration without clear benefit. There is a fear that with the splitting of the health service, our region, which already feels isolated and lacking in support at times, would be further removed from tertiary level resources for our patients.

Specific comments from members include the following:

“Much ground has been gained with the new administration of Hunter New England Local Health District- they are actively trying to support the New England area.”

“If we don’t have a connection to a tertiary site where will our referrals for high acuity obs/medical/trauma go?”

“I would be concerned at trying to cut ourselves free without having a safety net and knowing that we are self-sufficient up here first, as it could makes things a whole lot worse for our patients.”

“It is currently unclear what administrative model would work best to gain sufficient and adequate funds to run the hospital services.”

“Having a large tertiary hospital in our health district is helpful. There is always someone at John Hunter across every specialty who you can ask for advice/help. Armidale Hospital feels neglected. Anything that would help improve the provision of services including visiting specialists to the Northern Tablelands is worth considering.”

“Feels like a change of letterhead, costing lots of money without benefit where the need is most felt.”

“More management positions, more bureaucracy”

“I don't think it is a good idea at all. I don't think as a separate health district we'd be able to staff all tertiary specialty services on par with what John Hunter Hospital is currently offering...even if those services are hard to access at times. Where will all the specialists come from to staff the new health district?”

Thankyou for your consideration of all the issues.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Alexandra Draney (Chair)
Dr Michelle Guppy (Company Secretary)