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Legislative Council
Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health
Parliament of New South Wales
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27 July 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

**Inquiry into Health Outcomes and Access to Health and Hospital Services in Rural, Regional and Remote
New South Wales - Post-hearing responses – Wednesday 16 June 2021**

Supplementary Question 1:

In addition to what is contained in your submission and evidence provided at the public hearing, do you have any further comments regarding the current provision of palliative medicine, nursing and care in Gunnedah and the region?

Response: During my evidence before the Inquiry on Wednesday 16 June 2021 I made reference to a community survey that had been undertaken by the Rural Doctors Network to inform the development of a document detailing the current state of play in the Gunnedah Shire with regard to medical services and subsequent development of a GP Attraction and Retention Strategy. That survey has now been analysed and the results of that survey are attached for the information of committee members. I trust you will find it of further value to understanding the situation on the ground in Gunnedah.

Supplementary Question 2:

In addition to what is contained in your submission and evidence provided at the public hearing, do you have any further comments regarding ways to improve both the access and availability of palliative medicine, nursing and care in Gunnedah and the region.

Response: I ask that the committee note the resolution of the Country Mayors Association of NSW on Friday 28 May 2021 calling for the establishment of a dedicated Ministry called the 'Ministry of Regional and Rural Health' with responsibility of driving the urgent improvement of rural health services and the implementation of the recommendations that arise from this Inquiry. I think it is critical that after recommendations are made on how to address the issues identified by the Inquiry, that the Government take swift and decisive action to remedy the widespread inadequacies in rural medical services that have been thoroughly ventilated in the many submissions and hearings before this Inquiry.

Yours faithfully

Councillor Jamie Chaffey
MAYOR

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jc:tm





NSW RURAL DOCTORS NETWORK
CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

Results of the 2021 Gunnedah Shire Community Survey on Primary Health Care Service Provision

June 2021

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NSW Rural Doctors Network activities are financially supported by the Australian and NSW governments

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1. Background

The online Community Survey conducted with residents of the Gunnedah Shire Council area in April 2021, adds residents' lived experience of the Shire's Primary Health Care services to the "on paper" State of Play report on General Practice (GP) services provision completed for the Council in March of 2021.

This survey was designed to capture the areas of the service that are and are not meeting resident needs and collect respondents' perceptions on what and how they would like services to be improved.

The survey is the second step in a community-development Town Based Planning process that the NSW Rural Doctors Network (RDN) employs to analyse service provision strengths and gaps. This is needed to inform the third step in the process, consultation and engagement with stakeholders and community in planning collaborative strategies designed to alleviate service provision gaps and strengthen their sustainability into the future. (See Appendix 2 for a graphic of the model).

2. Executive Summary

In April 2021, the Gunnedah Shire Council hosted an online community survey of residents' experiences and perceptions of primary health care services in the Shire. Twenty-one questions designed to gather residents' lived experiences with the range of services in the primary health care environment during the previous year, were put to residents. Seven hundred and eleven residents, who answered for themselves plus a range of other people in their networks, lodged their responses, including explanatory comments. The respondents alone comprised just under six percent of the Shire population. This report presents the responses and experiences of these 711 residents and is designed to be read in conjunction with the State of Play Report of the GP Workforce completed in early 2021.

The message from the respondents was clear. The great majority expressed confusion, frustration, anger and in some cases disgust with the poor level of service currently available in Gunnedah for the residents of the Shire. This was true even among the minority who considered that their needs were being met or who had not used any of the services in the previous year.

While the most frequently used service in the previous year had been pathology services, it was the second most used service – routine GP consultations – that respondents indicated was most in need of improvement, followed by Emergency Department services and then pathology services.

Limited or no access (with associated long wait times) and quality of service were the two “could be improved” themes that emerged most often, with access issues being the most common. Respondents were clear that the lack of sufficient GPs in the town had flow on effects to the hospital Emergency Department, to admission to the Gunnedah Hospital (and subsequent need to be transferred to Tamworth Hospital), to follow up on test results, to services provided in other towns – particularly Boggabri and Tamworth, but also much farther afield - and to leaving residents no option but to seek treatment elsewhere or to attempt to manage without treatment.

A significant number of respondents registered distress and dismay at no longer being accepted as an existing patient of one of the two remaining General Practices in Gunnedah, sometimes after four or five decades of patronage.

More than half of the respondents elected to elaborate on their experiences with primary health care services utilizing the “other comments” section at the end of the survey. Some of the community priorities that emerged from this included:

1. Provision in Gunnedah of GP services that meet community need (particularly for children, the elderly and those who are unable to travel unaided to other towns). Among the community needs that respondents specified were access to routine and emergency GP consultations in reasonable time, continuity of care over time, follow up on testing, preventive care, and in some cases, bulk billing.
2. Provision of reliable emergency services, both GP and Emergency Department, that are responsive to the emergency nature of the need, have adequate medical staffing and are available 24/7.
3. Locally available diagnostic services whose hours for routine testing are clear, have reasonable wait times, and are available for emergencies 24/7.
4. For those in the reproductive years, more secure obstetrics services at the Gunnedah Hospital, including 24/7 availability for birthing and sufficient GP Obstetricians to provide birthing, prenatal and postnatal services.

As might reasonably be expected in any community dealing with a complex service provision model, very few respondents suggested strategies to improve services beyond providing more of those services in shortage, for example, more doctors, more staff, more services locally. Nevertheless, together with the State of Play Report of February 2021, the results of the Gunnedah Shire Community Survey provide the evidence base and the community's service provision priorities to guide discussions and negotiations aimed at improving primary health care service provision for the Shire's residents.

3. Information relevant to the survey

3.1 Professions that Work in Primary Health Care

[Primary Health Care](#) is generally the first contact a person has with Australia's health system. It relates to the treatment of patients who are not admitted to hospital.

Primary Healthcare Service providers in rural NSW in Shires such as Gunnedah, include:

- General Practitioners (GPs). These are mostly in private practice or are employed by/contracted to an Aboriginal Medical Service.
- Nurses in a range of primary healthcare settings including general practice, community health and domiciliary care.
- Allied health workers in a range of settings including private practice, general practice, and community health services.

The online survey included service provision questions relating to the service settings of all three groups in Gunnedah Shire and the surrounding geographic area.

3.2 What Is Considered Desirable in Rural Primary Health Care Service?

a) From a resident's point of view

Residents of rural communities want high-quality health services that are:

- accessible
- affordable
- high quality
- culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents

They want services to be provided by:

- skilled practitioners with whom they can readily relate
- practitioners who can provide continuity of care
- both male and female GPs.

Accessibility includes such considerations as:

- a service being known to the community and present in the community
- affordability
- ability to access a needed service in a timely fashion (such as ability to obtain an appointment in a reasonable time)
- near to transport, community services, parking
- suited to the health needs of the community
- being culturally safe and responsive to Aboriginal and other culturally and linguistically diverse members of the population
- the ability for aged, disabled, frail and ill people to use the health service buildings
- being able to obtain timely treatment in an emergency 24/7
- the ease with which patients can activate referrals from the GP to other services, including allied health services
- the degree of integration among health services (GPs, private and public allied health, community health, and the hospital accident and emergency department) and between general practices
- having a service that continues over time (in turn related to succession planning for health professionals and other strategies to sustain the service into the future).

Integration and proximity of services to one another supports the primary health care approach to health care provision.

Affordability is related to the capacity for patients to pay for their health services, and therefore is in turn closely linked to their doctors' policies on bulk billing. In rural settings, it may also be related to the cost of travelling to the service.

3.3 The Primary Health Care Environment in Which the Survey Was Conducted.

This survey followed on from a State of Play analysis of General Practice services provided in the Gunnedah Shire in February 2021. This analysis established that with a population of around 12,600 people, and 5 resident GPs at this time (one working part time and one a GP Registrar), that the GP to population ratio was around one GP to every 2670 residents, which is well outside a service level of 1 GP per 905 population proposed by the Australian Medical Workforce Advisory Committee in August 2000. This on-paper calculation indicated that 13 – 17 full time equivalent GPs would better meet the primary health care needs of the shire.

The drop in GP numbers had placed such pressure on the two general practices that all doctors' books were closed to new patients, and the overflow of patients seeking appointments was being felt in nearby towns such as Boggabri.

Given that the GP services in Gunnedah have traditionally been closely linked to Gunnedah Hospital for inpatient, obstetrics, anaesthetics and Emergency Department services, with associated surgical services the shortage of GPs has meant their services to the hospital had dropped to a level where about ninety percent of Emergency Department services were routinely provided by locums employed by the Local Health District for that purpose. In addition, obstetrics and anaesthetic services were under threat because only two GPs with these advanced skills remained in practice when two or three of each would be more appropriate. Finally, the inpatient beds were underutilised because the Emergency Department locums are unable to admit patients under their care, the local GPs provide inpatient care only to patients of their own practice, and patients requiring admission are regularly and of necessity transferred to hospitals outside of Gunnedah.

The online survey questions, then, were designed to obtain Shire residents' lived experience of negotiating a primary health care service under such significant pressure, and their thoughts on priorities and potential solutions.

3.4 Form of the Survey

An online confidential survey using Council's existing capability in this area was selected as the means of collecting residents' lived experiences of Primary Health Care service provision in the Shire, based on the success and usefulness of previous Council surveys. It was also selected in the knowledge that face-to-face consultation with the community is anticipated when strategies to alleviate the service provision problems are discussed.

The questions for the survey were developed by RDN in consultation with Council, and Council used the instrument (Survey Monkey) to collect and collate the data from residents.

The questions about services relate to experiences in the past 12 months.

3.5 The Survey Questions

The survey comprised 21 questions, the first four of which comprised demographic information. The remainder were about usage of the range of Primary Health Care services in the past 12 months, each with a comments section.

The questions include three on Hospital services because the medical component of these is normally provided by Gunnedah GPs, that is, by doctors from the primary health care sector.

The questions are at Appendix 3.

3.6 Managing Written Responses

Each question included capacity for respondents to record their experiences and views, and there was an open question at the end of the survey seeking any further comments.

While it was anticipated that these sections could elicit stories rich in content, confidentiality requirements would prevent them being quoted. Hence, written responses were coded where possible to capture the issues they contain, subsequent to being included in aggregated commentary against each question in this report.

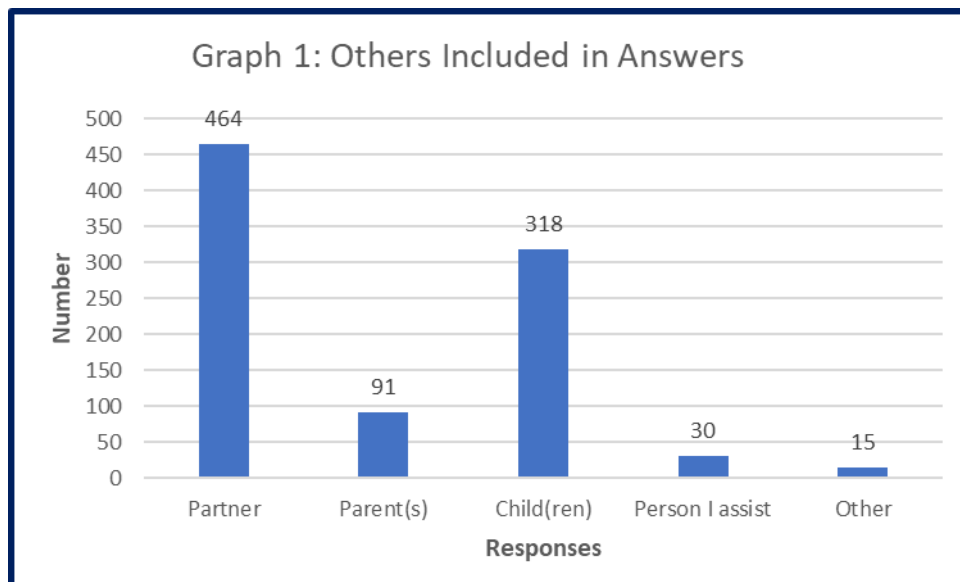
4. Results of the Community Survey

4.1 Characteristics of residents who completed the survey

(Questions 1 – 4)

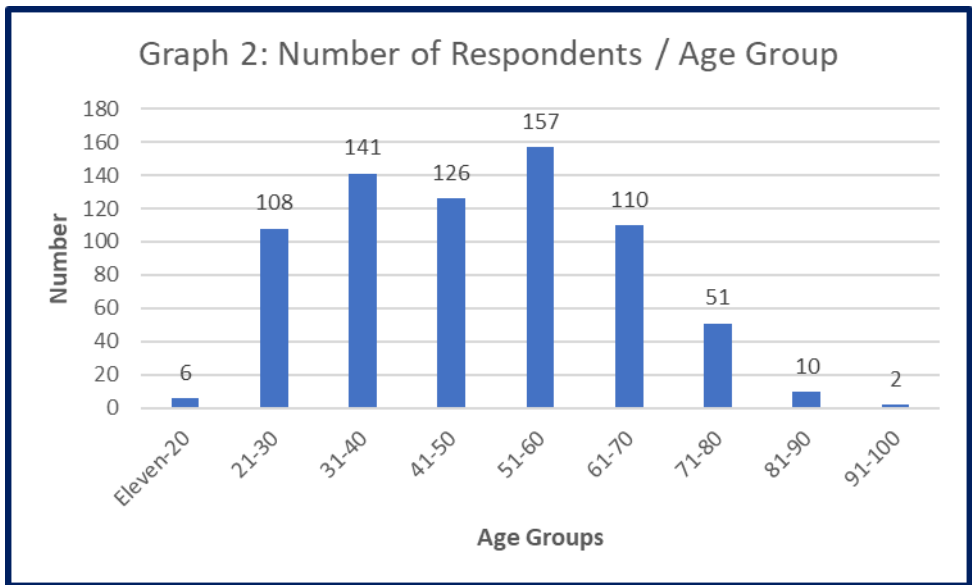
Almost six percent of the population (711 people in an estimated population of 12,491) completed the survey. However, most were providing answers for more than themselves, many speaking for partners (464), parents (91), children (318), as well as smaller numbers for people they provide assistance to, namely community (5), clients (3), family (3), grandchildren (2) and work (2). Only 87 respondents were answering for themselves alone, and this meant that the survey reach may have been well beyond the 711 who participated to include a further 918 or more in family and networks. That the experiences of family and networks were included was further reflected in the comments section of each question.

Sixty five percent of respondents included their partners in their responses while 36% included their children, as shown in the Graph 1 below



These figures also suggest that while female respondents outnumbered male by about 5 to 1 (577:132), the experiences of a further proportion of male residents may have been represented through their partners, mothers and daughters who responded to the survey.

The respondents ranged in age from under 20s through to in their 90s, with 75% falling into the 31 to 70 age groups as shown in Graph 2 below:



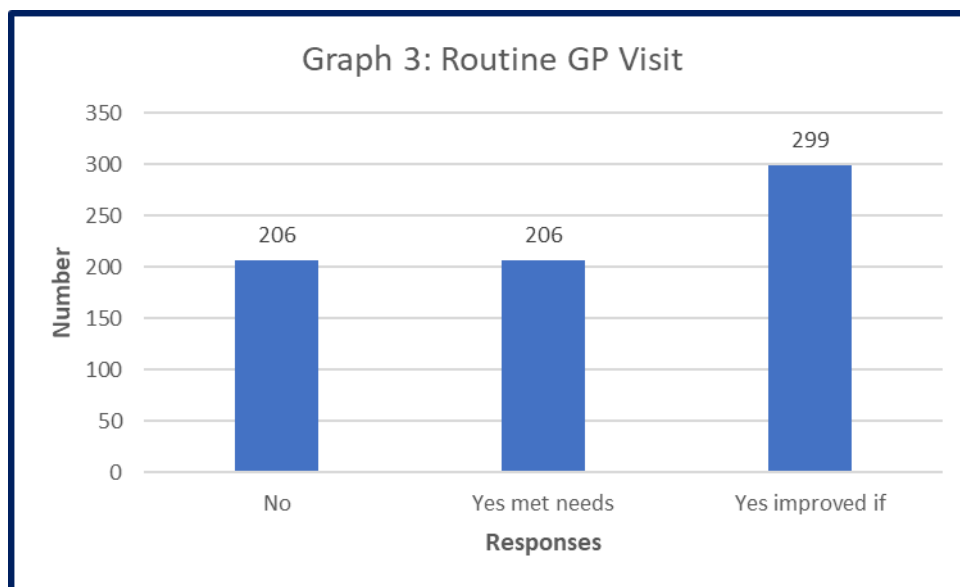
Of the respondents, 74 identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This comprises 11% of the respondents, which is considered reasonable representation given that the proportion of people identifying as Aboriginal in the Shire’s population is around 12.8%.

4.2 The Experiences Respondents Shared About Primary Health Care Services

GENERAL PRACTICE SERVICES

4.2.1 Responses to Question 5 – Consulted GP

Responses to Question (5) “In the past 12 months have you had a routine GP consultation(s)?” are in Graph 3, below:



Graph 3 indicates that more than two thirds of the respondents had at least one routine GP consultation in the previous year. About 60% of those who had consulted a GP would have liked to see improvements in the service they experienced.

The challenges that respondents said needed improving included:

1. **Being able to see a GP in Gunnedah.** Towns that respondents mentioned that they had travelled to for a GP appointment included Tamworth, Boggabri, Narrabri, a town on the coast, Newcastle and Sydney. Several mentioned telephone and video consultations from services outside of Gunnedah. Others mentioned having no option but to seek services at the Emergency Department. Some spoke of the difficulties they faced in attending another town either because they had to take time off work or needed to depend on working family members to drive them to the destination.
2. **The struggle to obtain an appointment in Gunnedah.** Respondents spoke of the competition to obtain the few on-the-day emergency appointments, several mentioned telephoning up to 100 times before being able to get through, and then missing out on an appointment in any case. Others mentioned the frustration of either not being able to obtain an appointment and having to either attend the Gunnedah Hospital Emergency Department or find a new practice outside of Gunnedah to attend to their needs
3. **The long wait for the appointments in Gunnedah.** Respondents spoke of wait times of between two weeks to three months and more. Some indicated that the wait meant their condition deteriorated, they were unable to have essential prescriptions re-filled on time, or they were obliged to find emergency treatment to tide them over. Of particular concern to some was the inability to obtain a follow up appointment to check on a condition, refill a prescription, or obtain test results.
4. **Being rushed in appointments.** A significant number of respondents, while being glad to obtain an appointment in Gunnedah, recounted being rushed in the appointment, being

unable to deal with more than one interconnected issue, and of the doctors and staff being under pressure.

5. **Lack of continuity of GPs.** Respondents spoke of needing to repeat their history multiple times, of losing a connection with a doctor, of having no choice of doctor, of being attended by a locum who could not follow up.
6. **Lack of bulk billing.** This was especially so for children, particularly those with conditions that require ongoing medical care, including emergency care.
7. **Too few GPs in Gunnedah to service the population.** Underlying most of “Yes but it could have been improved if . . .” responses was a stated or implied problem of being too few GPs in Gunnedah to service the Shire’s population. Some went on to comment that they and their family were considering relocating because of this, others that it was illogical to promote Gunnedah as a destination of choice when medical services were not available, and a significant number expressed outrage and frustration with the situation.
8. **There was significant resentment evident in the many replies** where respondents who considered themselves patients of a practice, sometimes for 30 or 40 years, were informed they were no longer on the books because they had not attended the practice in a specific time frame in the recent past, or because the doctor who had cared for them in the past was no longer practising in that clinic.

Twenty one of the 206 respondents who replied that they’d had a routine consultation with a GP in the past 12 months and that it had met their needs, also provided an additional comment. Of those, 14 commented that their consultation had occurred outside of Gunnedah, in the Hunter Valley, Tamworth, Narrabri and Boggabri.

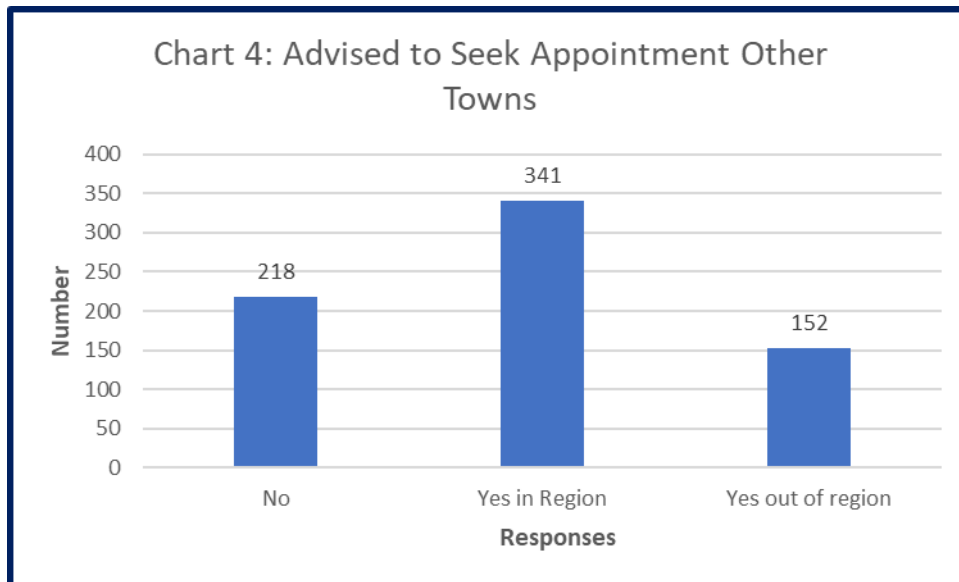
Of the 206 respondents who indicated they had not consulted a GP in the past year, 86 provided additional comment. The bulk of the comments were on the theme of “literally cannot get an appointment”, followed by individuals indicating that they seek GP services outside of Gunnedah: some references were general, but 9 specified Tamworth, 2 Boggabri, one Barraba, 5 the hospital Emergency Department, and one telehealth.

4.2.2 Responses to Question 6 – Encouraged to Transfer to Another Town

Responses to question (6), “In the past 12 months have you been encouraged by your GP practice to seek an appointment in another town?” are in Graph 4 below.

Response options to this question were

- a. No
- b. Yes within the New England Northwest
- c. Yes, I have had to seek a GP outside of the region

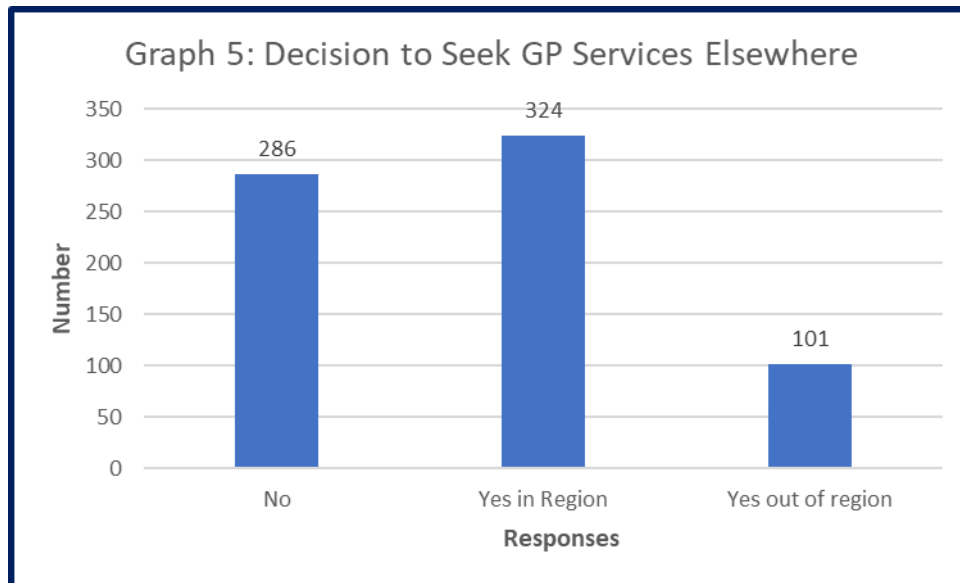


Graph 4 shows that 493 of 711 respondents (69%) recounted being advised to go out of town to seek General Practice services. The towns listed within New England North West region included Tamworth (72 mentions), Boggabri (28), Manilla (2), Narrabri (2), Werris Creek (1) and Quirindi (1). Another six said they had been advised to go to the local Emergency Department. Some of the respondents indicated that the advice had come from health professionals other than a GP

Just under one third of those who said they had been advised to seek GP services elsewhere had gone out of the New England North West region, to locations such as Scone, Sydney, Bellingen, Coonabarabran, Newcastle and the Hunter Valley, and a town on the coast.

4.2.3 Responses to Question 7 – Chose to Transfer to Another Town

Responses to question (7), “In the past 12 months have you made the choice to transfer to a practice in another town for your ongoing GP needs?” are in Graph 5 below. This question offered the same response choices as Question 6.



Graph 5 indicates that either in response to advice or of their own volition, 425 (60%) respondents had decided to transfer to a GP practice outside Gunnedah for their ongoing treatment.

Among the 324 who had chosen to (or in their own words, had no option but to) seek services in the North West region, were those who named the town they had transferred to. This included Newcastle, Gloucester, Bellingen, Nambucca, Coonabarabran, Sydney, Lismore, Western NSW, and at least who were using telehealth capability either to a surgery in another town or a service dedicated to providing telehealth consultations.

Those transferring within the North West region had found services in Tamworth, Boggabri, Barraba, Quirindi, Narrabri and Armidale. Again, many of these respondents stressed that transferring had not been their choice, but a necessity.

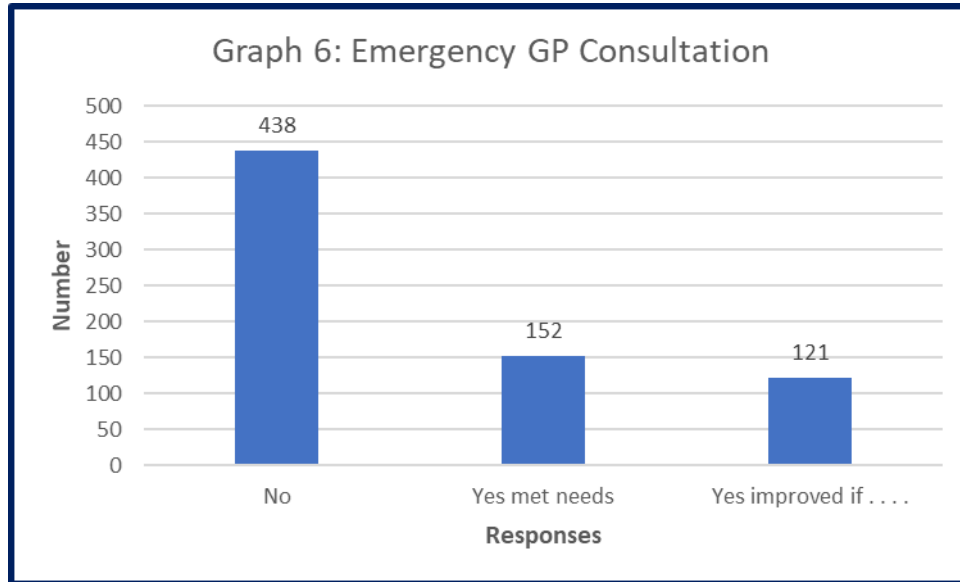
Although 286 people indicated they had **not** chosen to move to a practice outside Gunnedah, 46 of those provided explanatory comments which included:

- Having no means of accessing services elsewhere because of inability to drive, the need to not drive while ill, the costs involved with travelling, the impossibility of taking time off from work to travel, and the inability to find a practice that would take them on.
- Some were considering the need to move to a practice outside Gunnedah
- Others had already moved prior to 2019
- A small proportion of the respondents indicated they still had connections with a Gunnedah practice and therefore did not need to seek services elsewhere.

4.2.4 Responses to Question 8 – Emergency GP Consultation

Responses to question (8), “**In the past 12 months have you had an emergency GP consultation?**” are in Graph 6 below. Potential answers to this and all following questions were:

- a. No
- b. Yes, and it met my needs
- c. Yes but it could have been improved if



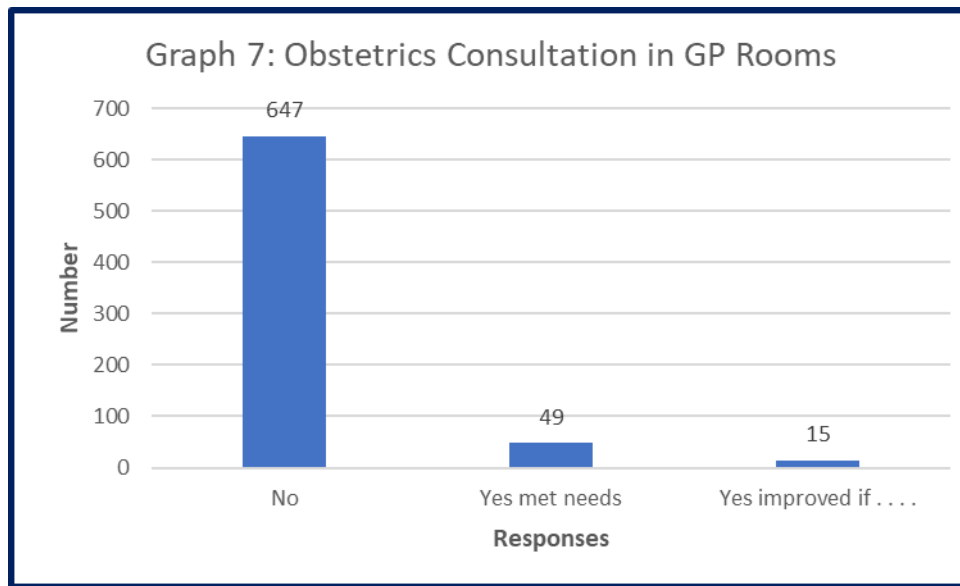
As could be expected with emergency consultations, a comparatively low 38% (273) of respondents answered yes to this question. Of those, 152 indicated the service had met their needs. However, 21 people in this group provided additional comments, including six who had obtained their emergency treatment at the Emergency Department, five who had gone out of town, and one who used telehealth facilities.

Among the 121 who felt their experiences with emergency GP consultation could be improved were at least 34 who had obtained their emergency treatment at the hospital’s Emergency Department, 29 who had gone out of town for it, and two who had consulted over the telephone. Others spoke of long waiting times, of the challenges of their history being unknown to the treating doctor, the struggle to obtain an emergency appointment, and the conundrum of being unable to obtain GP appointments for follow up monitoring and treatment.

Among the 438 respondents who had not had an emergency GP consultation were 22 who responded along the lines of “I was unable to get an appointment when I desperately needed it for my son” and “I have had the need but could not get in”, and “Can’t get in, so tough it out.” Others indicated that because they could not get an appointment, they attended the Emergency Department instead (10 respondents), went out of town (3) and consulted the local pharmacist (2).

4.2.5 Responses to Question 9 – Obstetrics Consultation

Responses to question (9), “In the past 12 months have you had an obstetrics consultation in the GP rooms?” are in Graph 7 below:



As expected from the age profile of the respondents combined with an annual birth rate of around 160 per year among residents of Gunnedah Shire, the numbers responding yes to this question were small at 64. Of those, 15 (23%) suggested improvements that included:

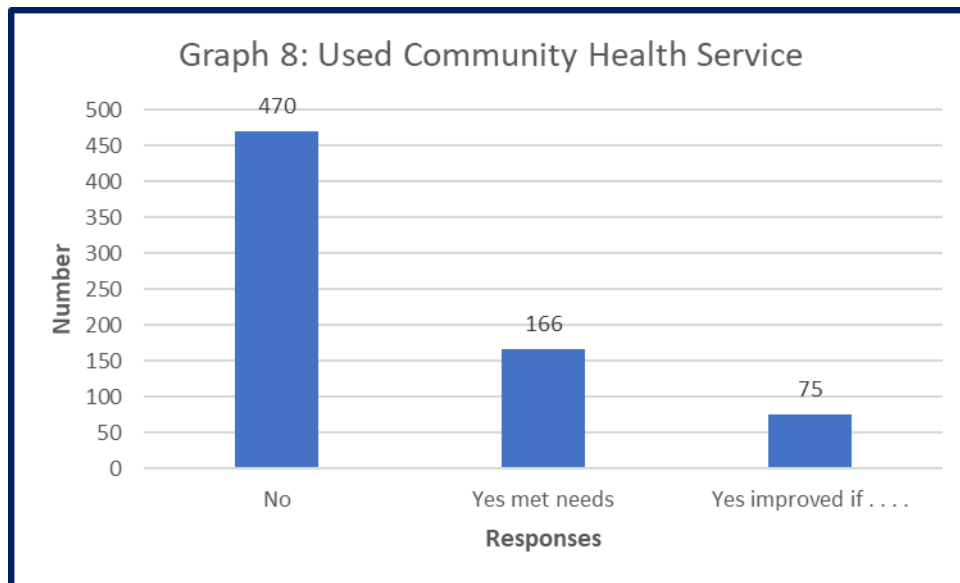
- Improve access to obstetrics services in Gunnedah, which covered the following issues:
 - Three indicated they had no option but to birth in Tamworth
 - Others mentioned feeling rushed in consultations, and the service provider being rushed
 - Being unable to change appointments that were made up to six weeks in advance
- Make it possible to continue with the GP beyond six weeks after birth.
- Provide options such as consultation with a midwife when it is not possible with the GP.

Among those who responded they had not had a GP obstetrics consultation were six who commented, including 3 who had chosen or been obliged through lack of availability in Gunnedah, to seek management of their pregnancy and birth elsewhere, including in Sydney.

4.2.6 Responses to Question 10 – Community Health Service

ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES

Responses to question (10), “In the past 12 months have you used community health services (provided by Hunter New England Health)?” are in Graph 8 below:



As a preface to reporting the results of this question, comments from several respondents suggest they were unclear what services come under the umbrella of the Community Health Service. Where a comment clearly did not refer to the LHD’s Community Health Service, for example commenting on a medical imaging service, those comments were excluded.

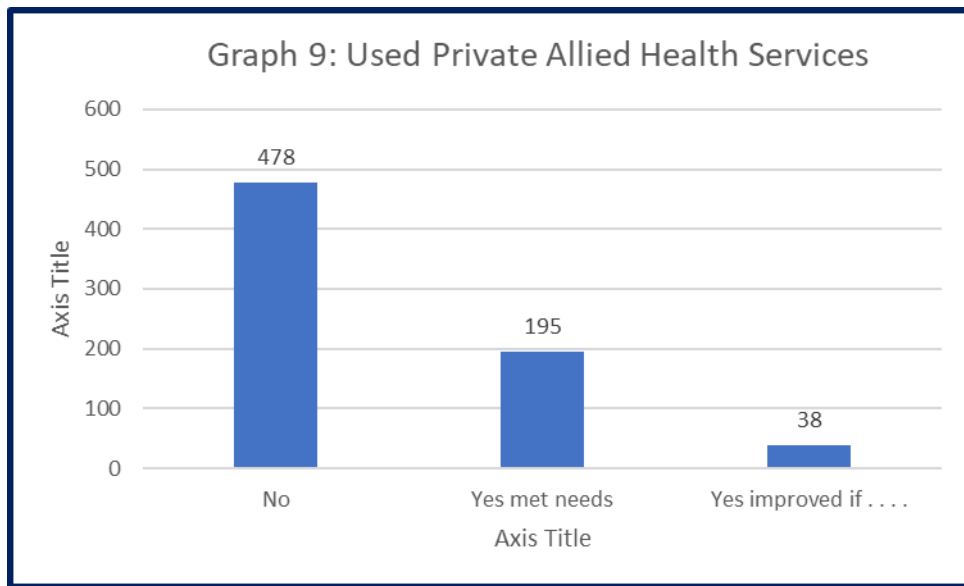
Two hundred and forty-one respondents said they had used the Community Health Service in the past year, and of those 166 (69%) said the service met their needs.

There were themes running strongly through respondent comments, including:

- Unable to access the needed Community Health service in Gunnedah (respondents listed Tamworth, Dubbo, Boggabri and Sydney as replacement service destinations)
- Inordinately long wait lists (cited from months to in excess of a year) that either compelled the person to seek help out of Gunnedah or left them unable to attend to the health problem for an unknown length of time. Forty-one (47%) of the 88 respondents who provided comments mentioned the length of waiting lists. While these were predominantly in the “Yes and it would have been improved if. . .” category, this theme was strong in all three answer groups.
- Inability to obtain an appointment with a GP to make a referral to the service
- Lack of flexibility in service provision times that make it difficult for people with work commitments.

4.2.7 Responses to Question 11 – Private Allied Health Services

Responses to question (11), “In the past 12 months have you used private allied health services)?” are in Graph 9 below:



Graph 9 shows that 233 respondents had used a private allied health service in the past year and most (84%) had their needs met. Nevertheless, of that group, seven commented they had travelled to obtain the service they needed, with Tamworth and Sydney mentioned. Physiotherapy and Chiropractic were specified by some as the services attended in Gunnedah, although that does not exclude others.

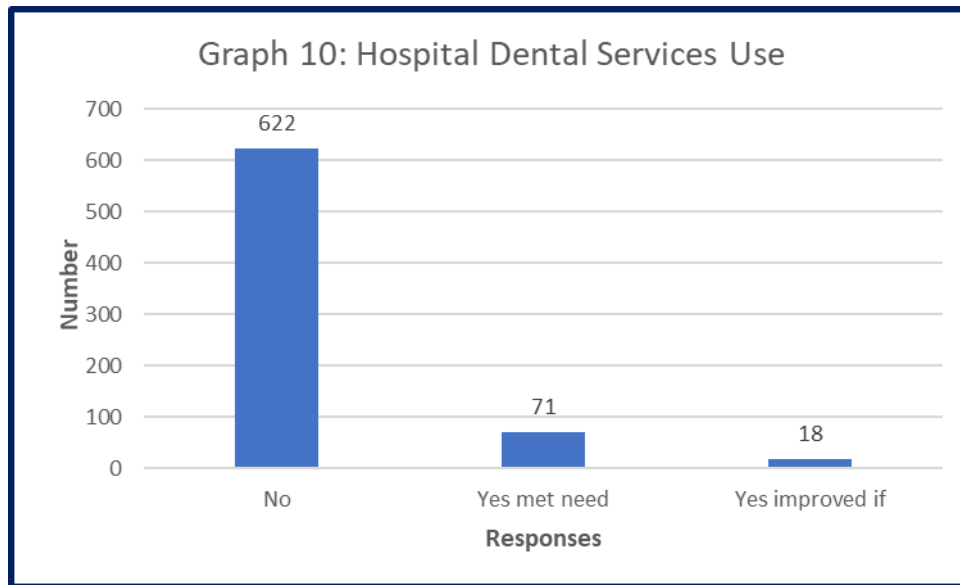
Nineteen of the 38 respondents who suggested improvements to their experience cited the desire to have the services they needed available locally, with Tamworth, Dubbo, Newcastle and interstate listed as current destinations. Again, the length of waitlists emerged and the need for more services in Gunnedah were themes significant in responses. Two people in this group cited the need for reduced costs for these services.

However, among the five people who answered “no” and provided a comment, a further two indicated they had attended out of town, and two more indicated they did not use private allied health services because they could not afford them.

4.2.8 Responses to Question 12 – Hospital Dental Service

DENTAL HEALTH

Responses to question (12), “In the past 12 months have you used dental services at the hospital?” are in Graph 10 below

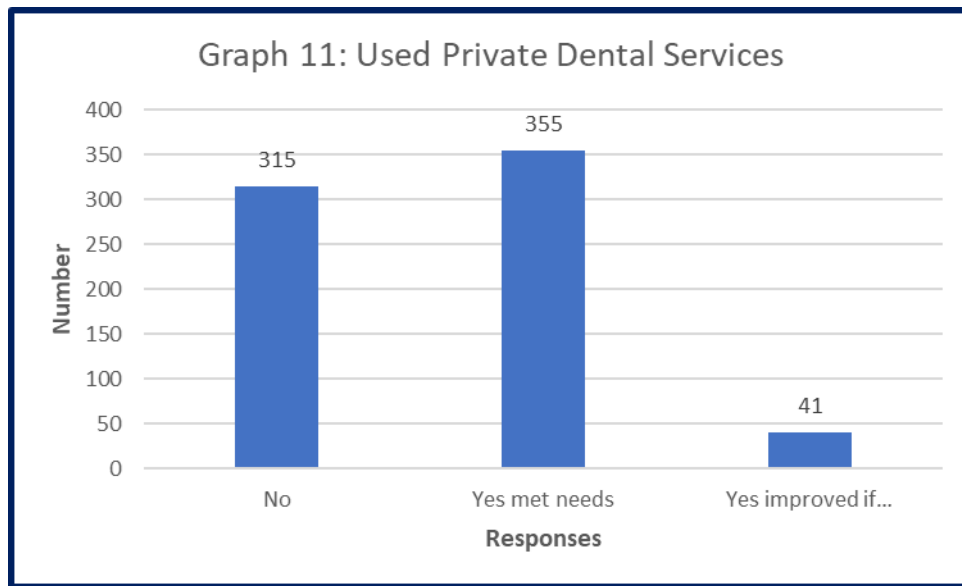


Few of the respondents (89 people) had used the Hospital Dental Service in the past year but of those who had, most had their needs met. However, the consumer experiences were not that simple. Of the 33 people who had commented on their NOT using the hospital dental service in the past year, three acknowledged they did not qualify for that service, three had chosen a private service because they paid insurance to cover it, eight said they were either waiting to be scheduled or “couldn’t get in” to the service, and at least five travel to Tamworth for services.

The most common comment among those who had used the service in the past year, was the long wait. Ten of the 18 respondents who said their experience of the service could have been improved cited the long wait in terms of months, up to a year and more.

4.2.8 Responses to Question 13 – Private Dental Services

Responses to question (13), “In the past 12 months have you used private dental services?” are in Graph 11 below



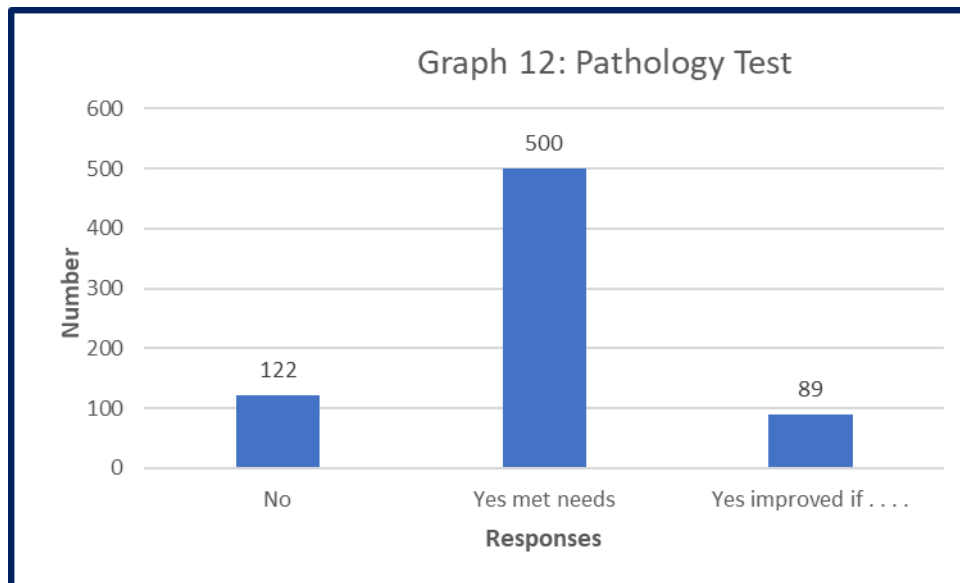
More than half (55%) of respondents had used private dental services in the past year. This compares to 2017-18 [national figures](#) indicating that 56% of Australians aged 15 years and more saw a dentist in the preceding 12 months. The great majority of survey respondents (355 people, 90%) who had used a private dental service indicated that it had met their needs. At the same time, 16 of those people indicated they had travelled out of town to obtain that service, including to Tamworth, Sydney, Hunter Valley and Queensland. Three of these people mentioned long wait times, indicating a shortage of private dentists in the area.

Of the 41 who said the service they received could be improved, 14 cited long wait times, 9 the high cost of treatment, and 8 indicated they'd prefer the service they used to be in Gunnedah. Some respondents in each of the three answer categories indicated that the cost of private dental treatment encouraged them to delay regular checkups and put off needed treatment.

4.2.10 Responses to Question 14 – Pathology Testing

TESTING SERVICES

Responses to question (14), “In the past 12 months have you had a pathology test?” are in Graph 12 below:



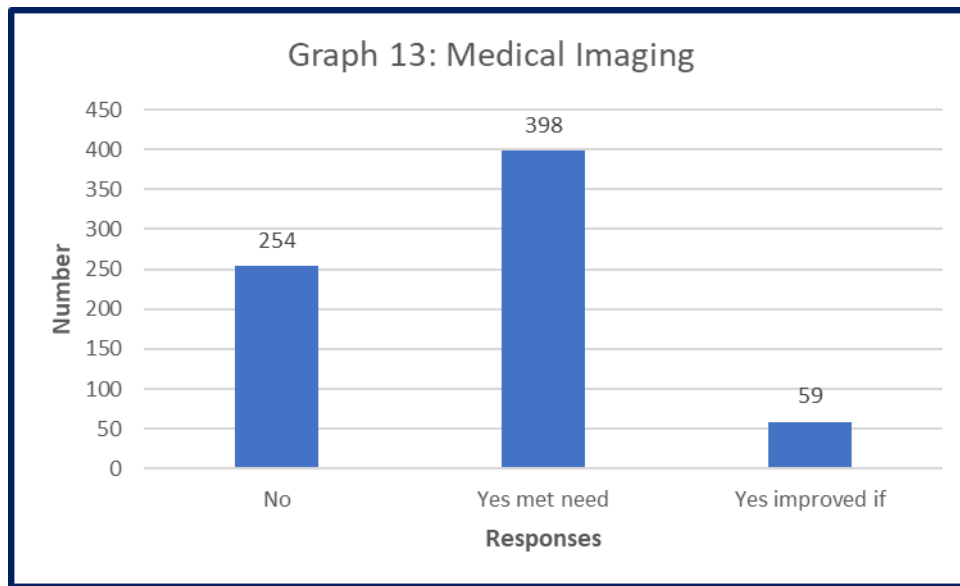
By far the most often used primary health care service among the respondents to the community survey is pathology services. Five hundred and eighty-nine respondents (83% of all respondents) indicated they'd had one or more pathology tests in the past year, and 500 of those had their needs met.

Eighty-nine respondents had suggestions for improving their experience with pathology testing, the bulk of them were related to the following:

- Insufficient collection staff leading to unacceptable wait times, especially during peak times
- The reduction during COVID restrictions to one collection point in town and the press this puts on that location
- Restricted hours contrary to signage making it difficult for residents to know when to present
- The loss of convenience of a collection centre in the GP surgery
- The inability to follow up tests in a timely fashion due to the inability to make an appointment with a GP to do so
- Difficulty obtaining after hours collection and testing, including at the Hospital and particularly in relation to obstetrics patients there needing to be transferred to Tamworth Hospital where after hours pathology services are available
- The quality of the service. While most of the questions in this survey included one or two comments on poor service quality, this question had nine mentions relating to lost samples, tests needing redoing, test results not reaching the treating doctor
- Two respondents noted that there is one 24-hour blood pressure monitoring machine which is insufficient for the demand.

4.2.11 Responses to Question 15 – Medical Imaging

Responses to question (15), “In the past 12 months have you had an X-ray, ultrasound or CT Scan?” are in Graph 13 below:



The survey respondents indicated they were quite significant users of medical imaging services, with 457 (64%) of them having had an X-ray, ultrasound or CT scan in the past year, mostly with a satisfactory outcome for the patient.

However, comments from 27 respondents whose experience had met their needs indicated that eleven had travelled out of Gunnedah for their test, often to Tamworth, sometimes because the particular test needed was not available in Gunnedah.

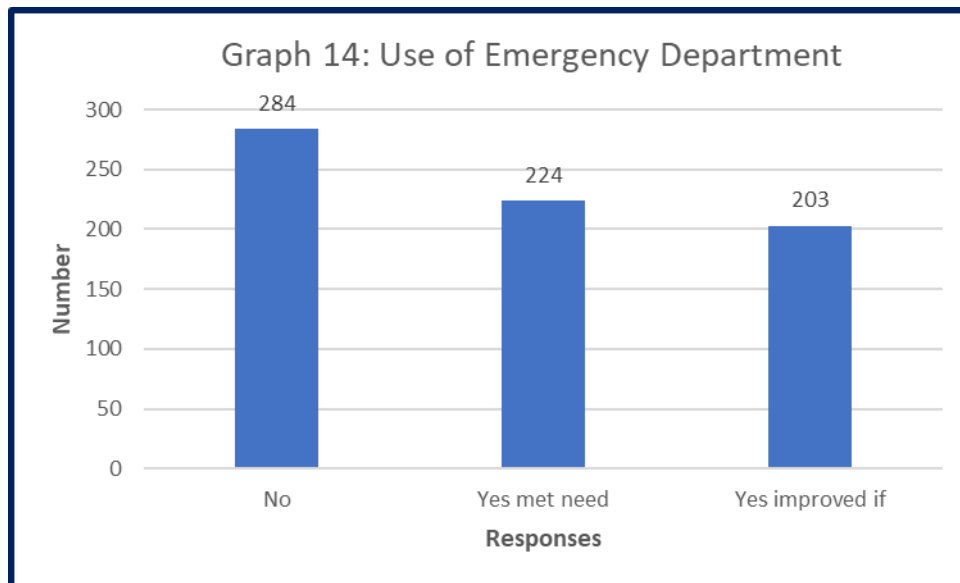
Among the 59 who suggested improvements to their service experience, the following four items featured:

- The cost of services
- Having to travel out of Gunnedah for the service, the most mentioned destination being Tamworth. Some acknowledged that their particular test was not available in Gunnedah.
- The difficulty of securing GP follow up on test results
- Some found the wait for an appointment too long, some found it difficult to secure an appointment for the time of day that was correct for the test ordered.

4.2.12 Responses to Question 16 – Emergency Department

HOSPITAL SERVICES

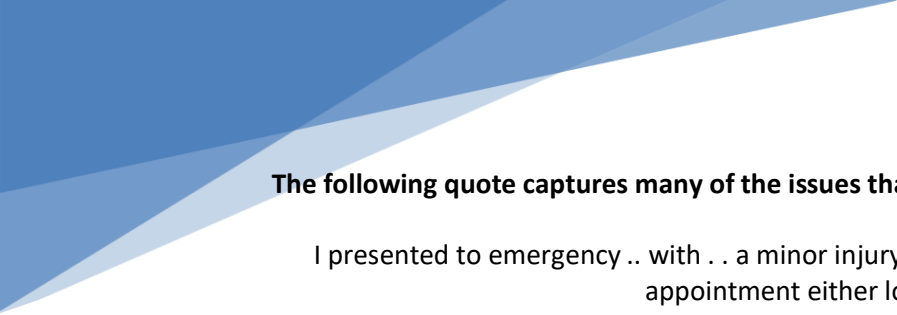
Responses to question (16), “In the past 12 months have you presented at the hospital emergency department?” are in Graph 14 below:



This question attracted the second highest number of responses of “yes and it could have been improved if. . .”, second only to GP consultations. The improvements individuals offered are largely covered by the following issue headings:

- Quality of the treatment and diagnosis
- Quality of the staff interaction with patients, the “bedside manner”
- The long wait times, most quoting around 4 hours, some in excess of 8.
- The lack of a doctor at the hospital at the time of presentation and for some time afterwards
- The variable quality of the locum doctors as well as their inability to offer or provide follow up
- Some of the processes increasing wait times and other frustrations (obtaining tests, inability for staff on duty to access patient GP medical history held elsewhere, overwhelmed physical capacity to seat patients)
- Long wait times and inability to follow up either at ED or at GP rooms leading to individuals not seeking the treatment they need
- The need to be transferred or directed to another ED/hospital because usual care arrangements are no longer in place at Gunnedah Hospital.
- Feeling “not heard”, rushed, and dismissed.
- Treating doctors not having admitting rights to Gunnedah Hospital, consequent transfer to Tamworth or patient being driven by car to Tamworth.
- One respondent suggested the ED experience would have been improved if there were:
 - An attending doctor who had ward admitting rights
 - 24-hour on-site pathology
 - Bigger waiting room
 - Receptionist to answer door/calls
 - More consulting rooms
 - Permanent doctors

Other respondents while noting improvements also expressed their happiness with the service they received, some acknowledging the staff were under severe pressure.



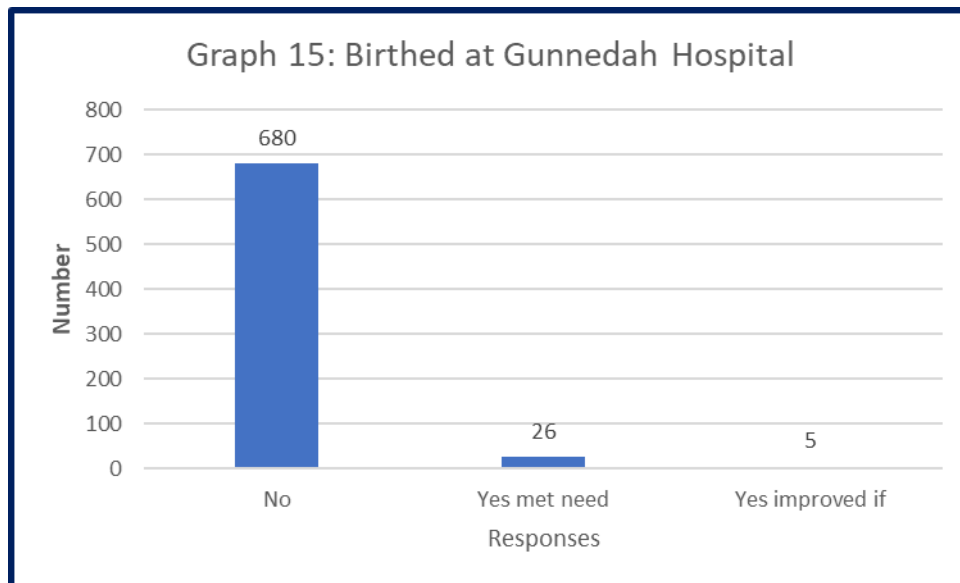
The following quote captures many of the issues that respondents spoke of:

I presented to emergency .. with . . a minor injury but unable to secure GP appointment either locally or outside of town.

The . . . locum doctor was amazing. I arrived at 10.15am and was attended to at 6.15pm so I saw lots of patients. When I arrived, I was directed to wait in the second waiting area but through the day, both waiting areas were full, up the hospital hallway and patients outside. The nursing staff were friendly and apologetic all day. People were moaning and groaning and some left. Two mothers were forced to leave after waiting 4 hours as they had to collect other children and one lady seemed very ill. When I spoke to the locum doctor at around 5pm, he hadn't even booked into his own accommodation. My guess is the doctor never even got a break. I overheard him say to a nurse that the hospital could benefit from 2 on call doctors and he's 100% correct. With the current doctor shortage, too many are presenting to hospital with GP issues, not emergency issues. I spoke to an ambulance staff member, and they are overwhelmed too as people aren't able to seek proper medical attention, health issues are being put aside until they become dire and then need an ambulance. Ambulance staff are also being held up extended periods with patient transfers to Tamworth due to extra pressures at Tamworth hospital. Does that leave Gunnedah Ambulance station short staffed? The current situation at Gunnedah Hospital is alarming. The day I experienced was nothing out of the ordinary to staff. The pressures and delays accessing medical staff in Gunnedah is beyond acceptable.

4.2.13 Responses to Question 17 – Birthed at Gunnedah Hospital

Responses to question (17), “In the past 12 months have you birthed a baby at Gunnedah Hospital?” are in Graph 15 below:



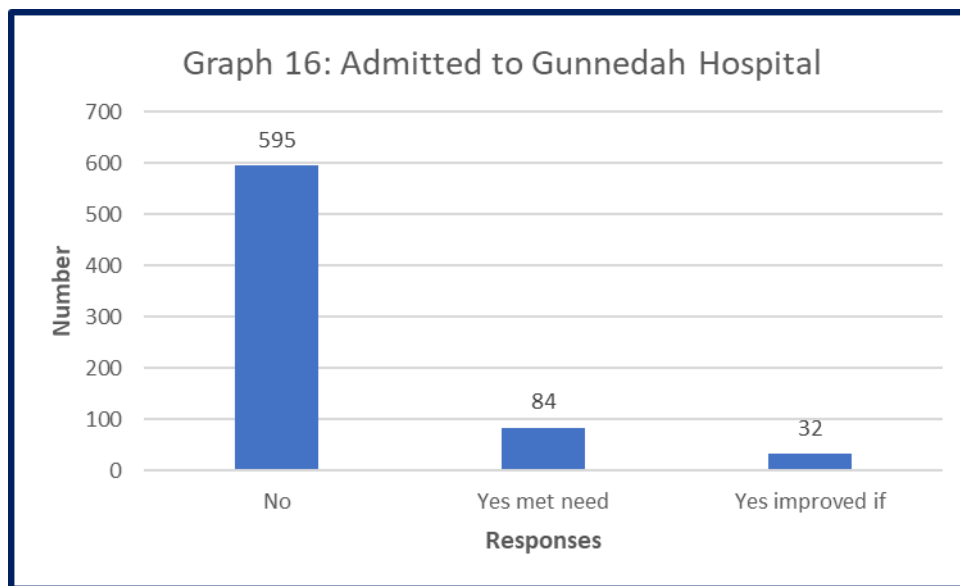
As would be expected given an annual birth rate for the Shire of about 160 per year, the numbers responding yes to this question were much smaller than for any other question.

There was a refreshing appreciation of the service and its staff among the respondents who indicated their needs had been met. Others who suggested improvements

- Expressed a worry that the service is understaffed both by GPs and midwives, and that this posed a threat to the obstetrics service remaining open
- Suggested a midwife-led service would be of benefit
- Were concerned that sometimes the birthing service is closed, one mentioning at weekends, and that pathology services are not available overnight
- Acknowledged that the service depended heavily on two doctors to provide both the birthing and anaesthetics services.

4.2.14 Responses to Question 18 – Admitted to Gunnedah Hospital

Responses to question (18), “In the past 12 months have you been admitted to Gunnedah Hospital?” are in Graph 16 below:



One hundred and sixteen respondents indicated they had been admitted to the Gunnedah Hospital in the past year. Of those, several had been admitted for the birth of their child, and several more expressed appreciation for the inpatient service they had received.

Of the 32 respondents who suggested improvements to their inpatient experience were three who had already commented in the previous question, ten who spoke of various aspects of service quality, eight who mentioned insufficient staff including too few or no doctor, three who identified wait times for admission to be unacceptably long, four who subsequently required transfer to Tamworth.

Five experienced difficulties with systems including

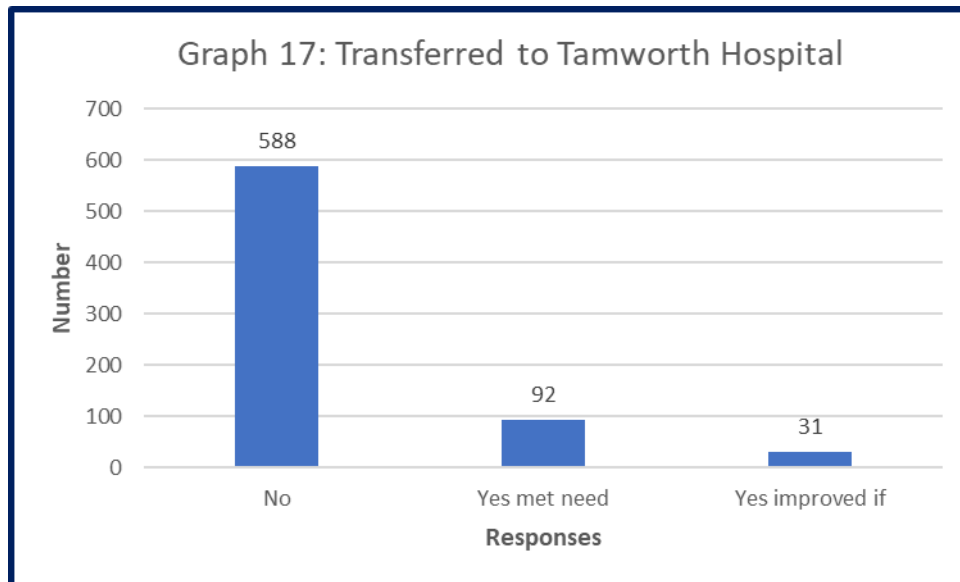
- The inability to transfer back again to Gunnedah because of the lack of doctors who could manage the person as a Gunnedah Hospital inpatient
- Malfunctioning air conditioning and no fans available
- Difficulties with receipting for a private patient
- Lack of transportation to transfer a patient to Tamworth
- One respondent had specific systems recommendations that covered better food, curtains on wards closest to the nursing station, more bathrooms for the rooms, and more private rooms.

Among those who said they had **not** been admitted were nine who indicated they were either transferred or directed to Tamworth. Among those were respondents who understood this was because

- The locum doctor at the Gunnedah Hospital did not have admitting rights
- The person’s own GP practice in Tamworth and had no admitting rights in Gunnedah
- The facilities required were not available in Gunnedah

4.2.15 Responses to Question 19 – Transfer to Tamworth Hospital

Responses to question (19), “In the past 12 months have you been transferred to the Tamworth Hospital?” are in Graph 17 below:



Seventeen percent (123) of the respondents indicated they had been transferred to the Tamworth Hospital in the past year.

Most (74%, 92 people) had their needs met in the transfer to Tamworth, while 31 had specific issues with their transfer experience. These included:

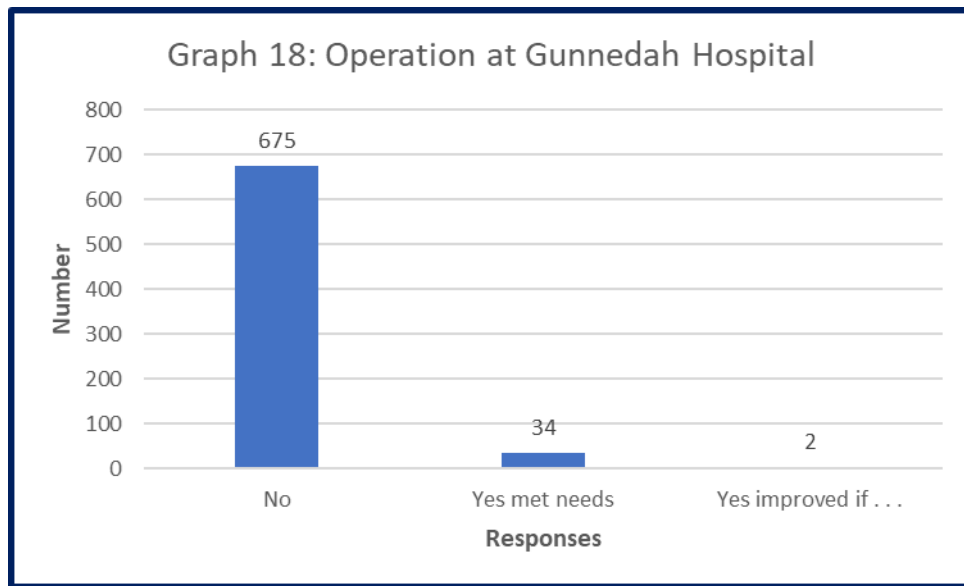
- Long wait times for transfer, some respondents experienced up to a 20-hour lag time between the decision to transfer, and that being achieved
- Difficulties with transport to transfer to Tamworth. Some reported no ambulance was available at the time, others reported arranging their own transport. One respondent commented on the possibility of making more use of both patient transport and private transport where that was clinically possible to free up the ambulance service.
- Perceived poor quality of the services at either end, both in staff manner and in diagnoses
- Absence of reasonable return transport arrangements for transferred patients being returned to Gunnedah Shire upon discharge from Tamworth. One patient reported being discharged with a small child at 3am with no arrangements in place for transport back to Gunnedah.
- Closer and more reliable communication between the organisations and individuals involved in any transfer
- Systems issues including a patient being transferred but no bed available at the other end, others reported paperwork or medical records problems, being shifted from bed to bed, and lack of follow up care.

Of those who had not been transferred, three indicated that they had taken themselves to Tamworth in preference to Gunnedah, and another to Sydney.

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4.2.16 Responses to Question 20 – Operation at Gunnedah Hospital

Responses to question (20), “In the past 12 months have you had an operation at the Gunnedah Hospital?” are in Graph 18 below

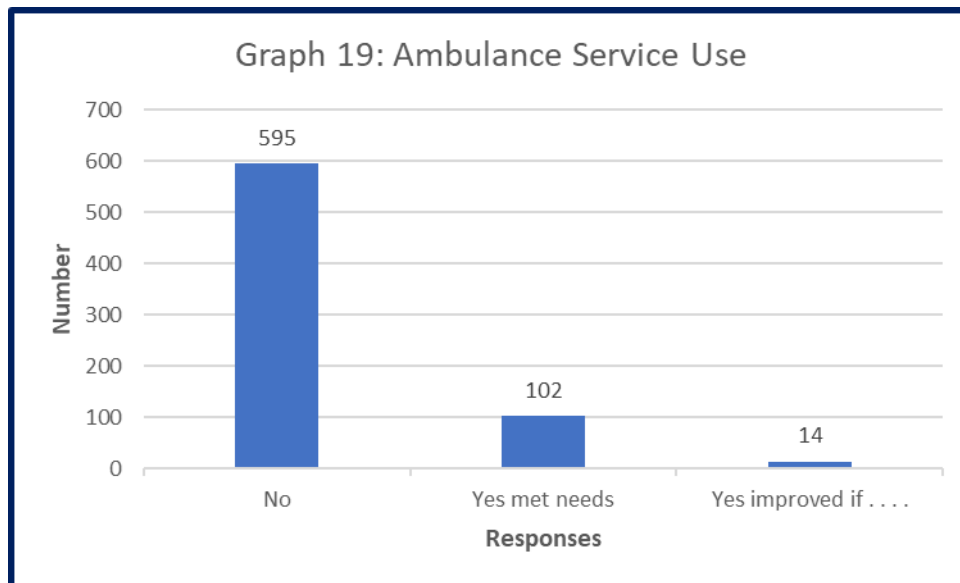


Only a small number (36) respondents had a surgical procedure at the Gunnedah Hospital in the past year. Of those, 34 reported an experience that met their needs. Two respondents mentioned the difficulty of obtaining a consultation with a doctor, and another suggested the bathroom in the day surgery area required maintenance.

4.2.17 Responses to Question 21 – Ambulance Service

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Responses to question (21), “In the past 12 months have you used the ambulance service?” are in Graph 19 below:



One hundred and sixteen respondents (16%) indicated they had used Gunnedah’s ambulance service in the past year. Some of those were for transfers between Gunnedah Hospital and Tamworth as reported in Question 19 above. For the most part, respondents had their needs met.

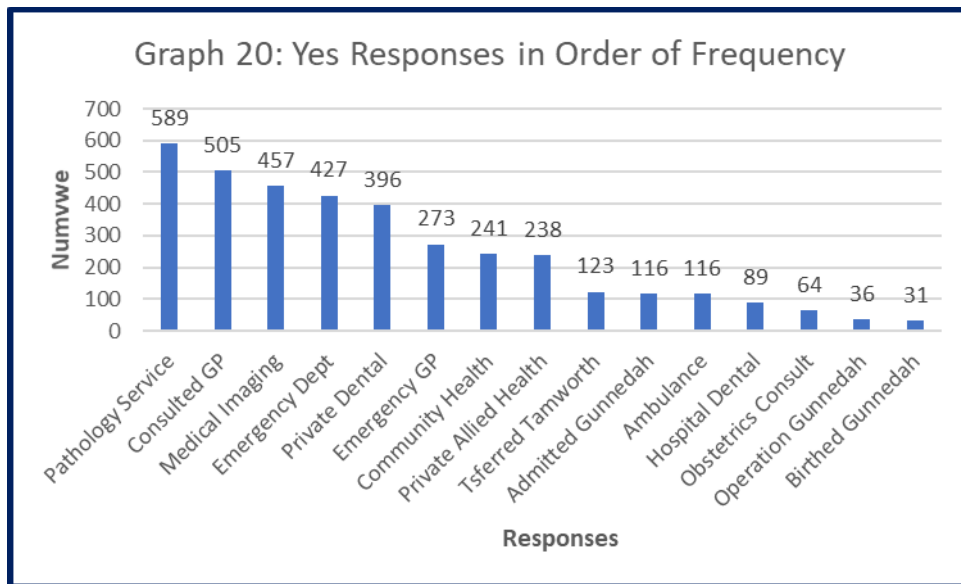
Three main issues encountered with the Ambulance Service were mentioned by several respondents. They are:

- Issues related to the pressure that the service is under due to the increased demand for patients to be transferred to Tamworth
- Rostering and fatigue issues for the officers stationed in Gunnedah
- Long waits for the Ambulance to be able to attend, sometimes due to units being away managing a transfer to Tamworth.
- The refusal on the part of the central emergency telephone facility to take and pass on instructions for how the responding Ambulance can access a property where an emergency has occurred

There were no quality issues raised about this service, but a number of expressions of gratitude.

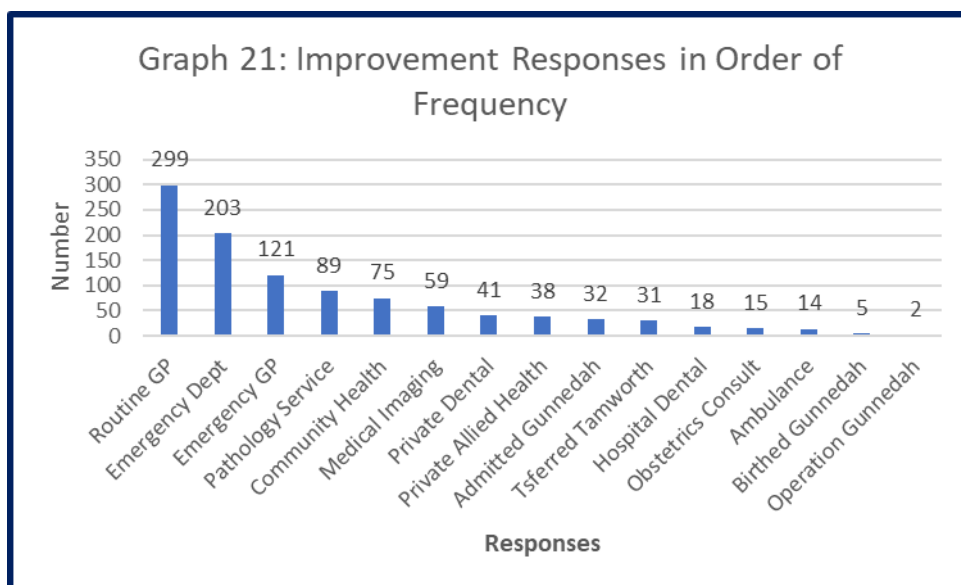
4.3 Service usage patterns

Graph 20 below shows from survey responses the most used to least used services in Gunnedah Shire, and this includes both in Gunnedah itself and outside the area in locations such as Tamworth and Boggabri.



In the current climate of GP and other reported shortages, the most used service amongst respondents over the past year has been pathology, followed by routine GP consultations, medical imaging (x-rays, ultrasounds, MRI, CT), the Gunnedah Emergency Department and private dental services. All of these services had been utilized by more than half of the respondents.

Services used by one third of respondents included emergency GP services, Community Health services, and private allied health services.



The services that elicited the most responses with regards to suggested improvements were routine GP consultations and Emergency Department services, with emergency GP services the next most common. All other services were well below one quarter of respondents providing this type of feedback, sometimes this was logical because the services were not widely used.

4.4 Comments provided in the open text section

Of the 711 respondents, 409 offered additional comments at the end of the survey (See Appendix 4 for details). Recurring themes significant for their frequency included:

1. The need for more services that the respondents considered were basic and the right of any citizen – doctors comprised by far the most frequently mentioned group, but allied health workers and hospital nurses also featured.
2. The need for services to be local to make them accessible to the population, particularly for the most vulnerable – children, those of low Socioeconomic Status, and those who because of age, ill health or reduced financial circumstances have no capability to drive themselves to other towns
3. Many commented about their experiences with the Emergency Department, with dominant themes being the wait time of four hours and upward, the overload on the service attributed to poor access to GP services, the feeling of having no option but to use this service for GP-like presentations, the lack of continuity afforded by locums, and also the quality of the clinical and pastoral service.
4. Expressions of confusion, frustration and anger upon finding that a long-term relationship with a practice had been severed without consultation
5. Comments about the consequence of poor access to primary health care services included conditions going untreated, follow up from tests or consultations in the Emergency Department being impossible, inability to arrange preventive checks, inability to obtain new prescriptions for regular medications and those being used a lower than prescribed levels to make them last
6. Some commentary about the quality of services offered, including personal stories of experiences in this regard
7. A number of respondents reported they were considering relocating to obtain ongoing access to better services, and others were of the opinion that promoting the Shire as a place to live and work was foolish given the paucity of primary health care services.
8. A smaller number mentioned concern that the birthing service in Gunnedah is sometimes not available and that it may be discontinued.
9. The cost of services, with the lack of bulk billing options mentioned.

5. Summary and Conclusions

Seven hundred and eleven responses were lodged with the community survey from individuals who in the main were logging the experiences of both themselves and a range of other people in their networks. The survey captured the respondents' lived experiences of the range of primary health care services available to them in Gunnedah. In addition, some comments were offered on services utilized elsewhere, such as in Boggabri and Tamworth.

The message from the respondents was clear. Including those who consider they are currently having their primary health care needs met or who have not used some of the services mentioned, the respondents expressed confusion, frustration, anger and in some cases disgust with the level of service currently available in Gunnedah for the residents of the Shire. The exceptions were the hospital obstetrics and the Ambulance services.

This message about services in Gunnedah was evident even among those who indicated they had traditionally chosen to seek services outside of Gunnedah, a phenomenon that appears to be an existing habit that would continue regardless of how capable the service provision is in the Shire.

Limited or no access (with associated long wait times) and quality of service were the two "could be improved" themes that emerged most often. Respondents were clear that the lack of sufficient GPs in the town had flow on effects to the hospital Emergency Department, to admission to the Gunnedah Hospital (and subsequent need to be transferred to Tamworth Hospital), to follow up on test results, to services provided in other towns – particularly Boggabri and Tamworth - and to leaving residents no option but to seek treatment elsewhere

A significant number of respondents registered distress and dismay at no longer being accepted as an existing patient of one of the two remaining General Practices in Gunnedah. Some had been patients there for up to four decades but had found themselves turned away because they had either not attended the practice for more than a year, or the doctor they had a history of consulting was no longer with the practice.

The most severe pinch points for access, and on occasion for quality of service, were identified as GP, Emergency Department, and pathology services.

Particular priorities identified included:

1. Provision in Gunnedah of GP services that meet community need (particularly for children, the elderly and those who are unable to travel unaided to other towns). Among the community needs that respondents specified were access to routine and emergency GP consultations in reasonable time, continuity of care over time, follow up on testing, preventive care, and in some cases, bulk billing.
2. Provision of reliable emergency services, both GP and Emergency Department, that are responsive to the emergency nature of the need, have adequate medical staffing and are available 24/7.
3. Locally available diagnostic services whose hours for routine testing are clear, have reasonable wait times, and are available for emergencies 24/7.
4. For those in the reproductive years, more secure obstetrics services at the Gunnedah Hospital, including 24/7 availability for birthing and sufficient GP Obstetricians to provide birthing, prenatal and postnatal services.

As might reasonably be expected in any community dealing with a complex service provision model, very few respondents suggested strategies to improve services beyond providing more of those services in shortage, for example, more doctors, more staff, more services locally. However,

residents' lived experience of the primary health care service available in the Shire gives their priorities, which are important in any negotiations undertaken to address service gaps.

Together with the State of Play Report of February 2021, the results of the Gunnedah Shire Community Survey provide the evidence base and the community's service provision priorities to guide discussions and negotiations aimed at improving primary health care service provision for the Shire's residents.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Explanation of Terms Used in This Report

1.1 Allied Health

The term allied health is relatively new and there is still no universally accepted definition of allied health professions. Instead, different governments and government departments, health service providers, health insurers and education providers include different professions under the heading 'allied health'.

However, there is general agreement on some basic principles. Allied health professionals:

- are health professionals that are not part of the medical, dental, or nursing professions
- are university qualified practitioners with specialised expertise in preventing, diagnosing, and treating a range of conditions and illnesses
- often work within a multidisciplinary health team to provide specialised support for different patient needs.

[\(AHPA What is allied health?\)](#)

In the context of the Gunnedah Shire, this is taken to include (but is not limited to):

- audiology
- chiropractic
- dietetics
- diabetes education
- exercise physiology
- occupational therapy
- pharmacy
- physiotherapy
- podiatry
- psychology
- social work and
- speech pathology

1.2 Community Health Service

A community health service provides primary health care services to clients in the community, and may include medical/dental, nursing and allied health professional care for clients in need, usually in the home or other residential setting, or in the Community Health Service premises.

The Community Health Service in Gunnedah is provided by the Hunter New England Local Health District, and the following services are available (expressed as availability in days per week).

- Aboriginal health education (5)
- Aboriginal antenatal clinic (1)
- Aged care (5)
- Aged Care Assessment Team - New England ACAT (Ph: 1300 789 077); My Aged Care (Ph: 1800 200 422) This service visits from Tamworth, as required
- Aboriginal maternal infant health service midwife (1)
- Audiometry (1)
- Cardiac rehabilitation (2)

- Community nursing (5)
- Diabetic care (1)
- Dietetics (2)
- Discharge planning (5)
- Drug and alcohol services (4)
- Early childhood services (5)
- Immunisation clinic, including the school-based immunisation program (1)
- Child and adult mental health - adult (3) child and adolescent (5)
- Occupational therapy (includes home modifications) - adult (2-3)
- Paediatrics (2)
- Palliative care (5)
- Physiotherapy (5) (providing both inpatient and outpatient care)
- Pulmonary rehabilitation (1)
- Social work including sexual assault counselling (5)
- Speech pathology (5)
- Women's health (3)
- Wound care (5)

The service also provides outreach to the villages of Mullaley, Curlewis, Carrol and Breeza.

Gunnedah Mental Health Services are provided through Peel Sector Community Mental Health Services, based in Tamworth. The services below are provided.

- One adult mental health clinician who is based at Gunnedah two days a week and Tamworth three days a week.
- The adult service looks after older people with mental health concerns. There are some specialists in this area available for Gunnedah residents.
- The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAHMS) position: a 1 FTE position based in Gunnedah.

The Healthy for Life program is managed by HealthWISE.

1.3 General Practitioner

In this report, General Practitioner is as defined by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing as a medically qualified person working in a medical practice that offers primary, continuing, comprehensive whole-person care for individuals, families, and communities.

The Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine defines the [General Practitioner](#) as the doctor with core responsibility for providing comprehensive and continuing medical care to individuals, families, and the broader community. Competent to provide the greater part of medical care, the General Practitioner can deliver services in the primary care setting, the secondary care setting, the home, long-term residential care facilities, or be electronic means – wherever and however services are needed by the patient within their safe scope of practice.

1.4 Locum

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines 'locum' (short for locum tenens) as a person filling an office for a time or temporarily taking the place of someone else. The term is generally applied to doctors or clergymen.

[\(Definition locum\)](#)

1.5 Primary Health Care

[Primary Health Care](#) is generally the first contact a person has with Australia's health system. It relates to the treatment of patients who are not admitted to hospital.

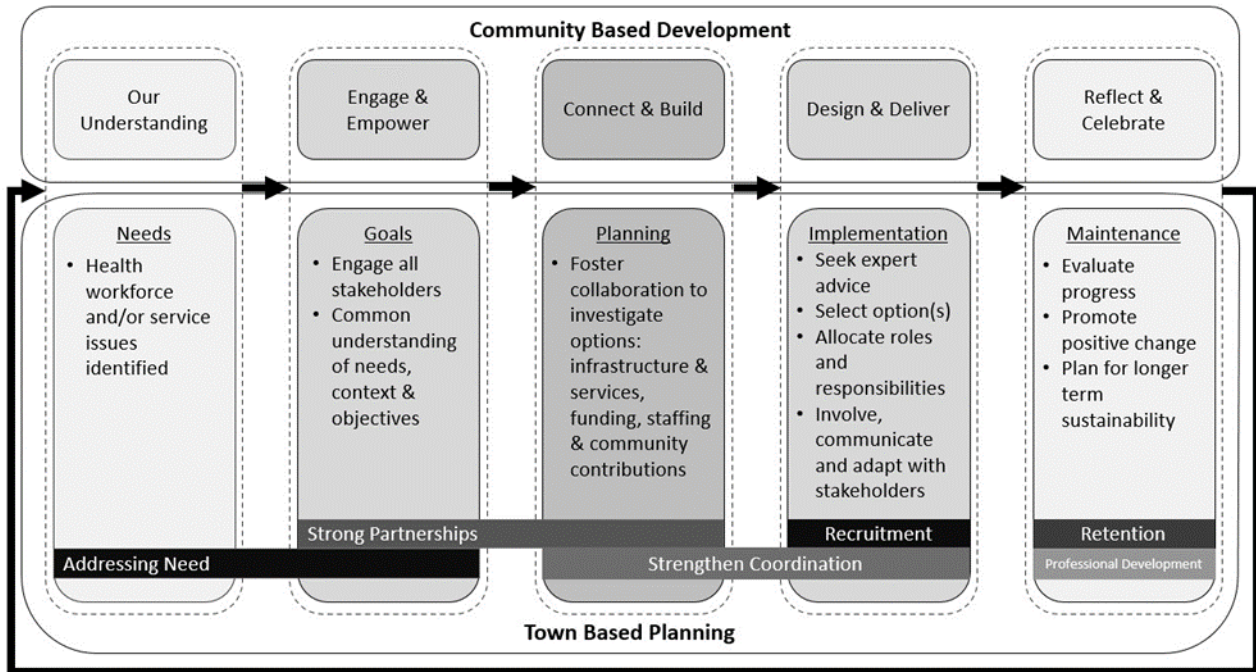
Many people associate primary health care with their local General Practitioner (GP). While general practice is the cornerstone of primary care in Australia, primary care can also include care provided through nurses (such as general practice nurses, community nurses and nurse practitioners), allied health professionals, midwives, pharmacists, dentists, and Aboriginal health workers.

Primary health care can be provided in the home or in community-based settings such as general practices, other private medical practices, community health centres, local government, and non-government service settings, such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. It is not provided in hospitals where the type of care is known as acute care.

1.6 Proceduralist

This refers to a General Practitioner who has post graduate qualifications and advanced skills in surgery, and/or obstetrics and/or anaesthetics.

Appendix 2: Community Based Development Model



Appendix 3: Questions in the Gunnedah Community Survey 2021

The questions were:

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Your gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Prefer not to say
2. Your age (in 10-year divisions)
 - a. 11-20
 - b. 21-30
 - c. 31-40
 - d. 41-50
 - e. 51-60
 - f. 61-70
 - g. 81-90
 - h. 91-100
3. Do you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. In this survey, who are you speaking for in addition to yourself?
 - a. My partner
 - b. My parent(s)
 - c. My children
 - d. A friend of relative I assist
 - e. Other (please specify)

GENERAL PRACTICE SERVICES

In the past 12 months have you.....

5. Had a routine GP consultation(s)?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes and it met my needs
 - c. Yes but it could have been improved if
 - d. Comments
6. Been encouraged by your GP practice to seek an appointment in another town?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes within the New England Northwest
 - c. Yes, I have had to seek a GP outside of the region
 - d. Comments
7. Made the choice to transfer to a practice in another town for your ongoing GP needs?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes within the New England Northwest
 - c. Yes, I have had to seek a GP outside of the region
 - d. Comments
8. Had an emergency GP consultation(s)?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes and it met my needs
 - c. Yes but it could have been improved if
 - d. Comments
9. Had an Obstetrics consultation(s) in the GP rooms?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes and it met my needs
 - c. Yes but it could have been improved if

- d. Comments

ALLIED HEALTH SERVICES

In the past 12 months have you

10. Used Community health services (provided by Hunter New England Health)?

- a. No
- b. Yes and it met my needs
- c. Yes but it could have been improved if
- d. Comments

11. Used Private allied health services?

- a. No
- b. Yes and it met my needs
- c. Yes but it could have been improved if
- d. Comments

DENTAL HEALTH

In the past 12 months have you

12. Used dental services at the hospital?

- a. No
- b. Yes and it met my needs
- c. Yes but it could have been improved if
- d. Comments

13. Used private dental services?

- a. No
- b. Yes and it met my needs
- c. Yes but it could have been improved if
- d. Comments

TESTING SERVICES

In the past 12 months, have you

14. Had a pathology test?

- a. No
- b. Yes and it met my needs
- c. Yes but it could have been improved if
- d. Comments

15. Had an x-ray, ultrasound or CT scan?

- a. No
- b. Yes and it met my needs
- c. Yes but it could have been improved if
- d. Comments

HOSPITAL SERVICES

In the past 12 months, have you

16. Presented at the hospital emergency department?

- a. Yes and it met my needs
- b. Yes but it could have been improved if
- c. Comments

17. Birthed a baby at Gunnedah Hospital?

- a. Yes and it met my needs

- b. Yes but it could have been improved if
- c. Comments

18. Admitted to the Gunnedah Hospital?

- a. Yes and it met my needs
- b. Yes but it could have been improved if
- c. Comments

19. Transferred to the Tamworth Hospital?

- a. Yes and it met my needs
- b. Yes but it could have been improved if
- c. Comments

20. Had an operation at the Gunnedah Hospital?

- a. Yes and it met my needs
- b. Yes but it could have been improved if
- c. Comments

AMBULANCE SERVICE

In the past 12 months have you

21. Used the ambulance service?

- a. Yes and it met my needs
- b. Yes but it could have been improved if
- c. Comments

PLEASE LIST COMMENTS

Appendix 4: Responses in the Open Comments Section

<p>*Why don't doctors come to and stay in Gunnedah? What is the real reason? Will we in the community ever know the truth?</p> <p>*Not only is the lack of doctors in Gunnedah disgusting, it is dangerous to the point of being life threatening! Life threatening at the time of an incident or medical crisis; and life threatening because people prefer to unwisely ignore serious issues with their own health - meaning their issues worsen and their health deteriorates rather than try, unsuccessfully, to see a GP locally OR be told to find a GP further afield!</p> <p>* Elderly people in this community should not have to experience such upheaval - and their resultant distress and anxiety that it causes them. They deserve kindness and compassion and respect - and they deserve access locally (here in Gunnedah) to permanent GP's.</p> <p>*It's all very well to have millions of dollars in place to upgrade/replace the hospital, but how is it going to run without doctors and medical staff?</p> <p>* There are currently ads on TV promoting Gunnedah - encouraging people to come to our beautiful town, with a wonderful lifestyle, access to facilities and jobs aplenty. BUT what has strangely NOT BEEN MENTIONED is the lack of doctors!</p>
<p>All hospital visits were in different towns because of lack of access to doctors in Gunnedah</p>
<p>All my comments are above... thank you for your time</p>
<p>Although the emergency department is flat out due to a lack of GPs in town, the staff could make it a much easier experience by listening to the patient / parents and having empathy and understanding.</p>
<p>Answers are on a personal level. However, clients are being rejected from services they have accessed for many years and told to see a GP in other towns. Clients with ongoing health issues are not even able to see a regular GP to have scripts filled or referrals updated for specialist care. Clients are then faced with transport barriers to access these out-of-town GPs therefore clients are not getting the care they are entitled to.</p>
<p><i>*Comment from an identifiable primary health care professional modified for confidentiality reasons* A comment on the lack of availability of positions in the Gunnedah area, when there is demonstrated need for services, and health professionals living in Gunnedah needing to travel to Tamworth, Narrabri for work opportunities. The demand is there for allied health, but the positions are not available. Excellent clinicians end up leaving due to lack of opportunities.</i></p>
<p>As a health provider in Gunnedah, I see first-hand how inadequate the current situation is. For instance, patients cannot be even admitted to the ward when needed unless they have a GP in town. Many of these patients are unnecessarily transferred to Tamworth. The on-call doctors are consistently inundated by GP work. The hospital needs to employ another doctor during daylight hours to see these patients.</p>
<p>As a nurse working in GP clinics in Gunnedah I was saddened & appalled at the lack of availability of appointments for the people of this town. Many older people especially could not get appointments & had to travel or have travel arranged somehow out of town just to see a GP.</p>
<p>As a parent it is deeply concerning that if my child became unwell It would be extremely difficult to obtain a doctor's appointment in Gunnedah. That you would have to travel with a sick child to another town to try and see a doctor. It is stressful enough as a parent when your child is unwell, and that stress becomes worse when you know if child becomes unwell you can't even get your child into a doctor in your own town.</p>
<p>As a student nurse it was hard to have paperwork that needs to be filled in by a GP when they aren't expecting new patients in my town and got told to go to Tamworth</p>
<p>As everyone else says, it's very hard to see a doctor if needed to get in right away.</p>
<p>As I have many health issues it would be very nice to have a GP in Gunnedah instead of traveling to Tamworth just to get scripts.</p>

As someone with two long term medical issues that requires monitoring and medications, I find that it can be challenging to get regular appointments easily. It can take numerous phone calls or having to wait a week or two to get an appointment with a doctor
As we all know the health services in Gunnedah and many other towns is appalling, hospitals run on bare minimum staff and supplies, and I have no words for the lack of rural doctors and how far we have to travel. I am terribly concerned for mine and my partners welfare as we age and may need aged and healthcare services on a more regular basis especially after the recent findings in aged care facilities.
At my age it's impossible to be treated for general health in Gunnedah. In the past a Tamworth trip was only to see a specialist - now we have to travel there for all medical services..
At this stage I have been going to Tamworth Doctor as I cannot get into see a doctor in Gunnedah when needed.
Basic GP services being unavailable will cost lives
Because I enjoy reasonable health, I haven't had the need to see a doctor, but have not had a doctor in Gunnedah since the Medical Centre closed, so currently go to Tamworth when I need to see a doctor, and usually have blood tests done over there as well. Would much prefer to go locally, but at the moment it is not an option. Also, have no idea what became of my records from the Medical Centre.
Being a parent in Gunnedah without having a GP is stressful. If my child gets sick our only options are to present to the hospital emergency department or travel to Tamworth for a GP appointment. The trip to Tamworth is 1hr drive and very distressing for a sick 1 year old child
Being able to access referrals, prescriptions and health care plans is incredibly hard
Being told that because I have not seen a regular GP in the last 2 years I am classed as a new patient and because of the shortage of doctors here in Gunnedah if I needed medical assistance I either find a doctor away from Gunnedah or present at the emergency department
Boggabri practice is now so overworked we can't get any bookings easily, Face to Face or telephone (it's not as it once was)!
Both the GP and hospital GP situation is ridiculous, doctor is happy to write a script and you pick it up, but they don't physically want to see you even after a trip to emergency and palliative care nurse tries to make an appointment for the patient. As a carer it is disgusting that caring for a parent with cancer cannot see a doctor on a regular basis but are happy to give script without regularly seeing the patient which to me seems to be negligent and against the law, people just seem to be a number and there is almost no care factor.
Bring more doctors to Gunnedah have full time doctors at the hospital don't use the local doctors as they are over worked
Cannot get into GP in Gunnedah as they are always booked out
Cannot get easily into a GP in Gunnedah within a day or two, everyone is booked out weeks in advanced and many won't even take on new patients.
Can't get in to a doctor. When sick 5 days before could see a doctor.
Considering leaving town and relocating to area with adequate medical services.
Could not get a doctor's appointment when I had a chest infection. Visited my daughter in Canberra and immediately got an appointment and antibiotics. Would like to see a Dr about some general concerns but know impossible.
Current doctors are doing a fantastic job however, they are run off their feet and needing far more support. The town is lacking with being able to provide basic care and the wait time for a simple GP consultation is atrocious.
Desperately need more GPs in Gunnedah it is truly terrible to not be able to see a doctor regularly
Doctors and paediatrics need to visit more often. I have a son with suspected allergies but cannot afford to visit Newcastle / Sydney to get the proper test so in the meantime he has to have a bare diet as we eliminate everything and slowly introduce foods.

<p>Doctors are desperately needed. We need services in town that will entice more doctors to the area. The govt. (State) needs to bring the services to rural areas. I am wanting to get pregnant again but am worried in case I can't get into my local doctor. I know lots of residents who have transferred to Boggabri Medical Centre Doctors and soon they won't be able to cope with the influx. Please do what you can. Gunnedah is such a great town. It's sad GPs don't see this. I am also worried our current doctors are going to burnout and the problem will only get worse. Cheers</p>
<p>Doctors should be obliged to serve rural towns. Pay back to the taxpayers who put them through uni.</p>
<p>Drs in the area need to reopen their books with so many newcomers to the area. I work with people that have lived in Gunnedah for more than 3 years and they have never been able to get into a doctor in town. Dr surgeries directly tell you to contact Boggabri or go to the hospital. Because the hospital is being used as a doctor surgery they are not providing adequate treatment to patients. I've also taken an injured worker to Gunnedah hospital who was sent home basically untreated. 3 days later he was in Tamworth hospital on IV antibiotics for an infection that wouldn't have happened had he been treated appropriately when he presented to the hospital. I have also had to go outside the region for access to a psychologist due to the waiting period locally. In addition, my doctor requested a cardio consult for a health condition as a precaution, this information was sent to the specialist for triage, and I never received a response or an appointment. I cut my finger quite badly at work and presented to Gunnedah hospital. I was transferred to Tamworth for an orthopaedic consult. I had to make my own way to Tamworth as they were unsure when patient transport would be available. Once in Tamworth the specialist sent me for an X-ray and then left for the day with no further follow up. I was then transferred to Newcastle for surgery, again having to make my own way there as they didn't know when transport would be available. In such a growing community, the need for real medical assistance is vital. Our two biggest industries are mining and agriculture... more than likely 2 of the industries with the highest incidence of workplace injuries... and we can't even get a doctor appointment for a cold!</p>
<p>Drs and imaging services need to be looked at as you have to travel to other towns and nowhere in Gunnedah offers bulk billing under any circumstances.</p>
<p>Due to Covid we received our scripts without seeing a doctor, which was great. However, when we needed a face-to-face appointment we were told (after being patients for decades with this surgery), that we had to find another doctor in a different town. This is despite mental health issues being involved!! The doctors that are here are wonderful, but something just has to be done!</p>
<p>Due to the inability to/stress around getting into a GP, residents are putting off seeing a doctor for minor health concerns which in many cases turn into major issues. I am unable to have a regular pap smear as my doctor is too busy, with a family history of reproductive issues I need to have this available but due to the usual anxiety around a pap smear, the added stress in trying to get into the doctor is a massive turn off in getting it done</p>
<p>Due to wait times I travel outside the Hunter New England health area for medical appointments.</p>
<p>Everything needs to be upgraded in this town in regard to health services. We can't expect people to keep moving here if we lack simple things like doctors</p>
<p>Feel as I am getting older I feel leaving Gunnedah and residing at a location where Dr are able to see you quickly and larger hospital facilities. Planning this over the next three years.</p>

<p>I am so worried by the health impacts that this GP crisis is having on my beloved community. None has been getting preventative health checks for ages, people are not going to the GP to get things checked if they are worried. - what does this mean for the overall health outcomes for our community? We already know rural health compared to city health is much worse....now the divide will be even greater There is no accessible free or almost free public transport eg buses/trains for elderly, frail , disabled to get to bigger centres to access GP consults- too expensive to travel by taxi Some limited support via GoCo- am not too sure what they offer, ? not widely known Therefore it is almost impossible for community members without their own car to gain a GP appointment in another town Outlying towns are closing their books to Gunnedah patients - they are becoming overwhelmed & stressed trying to give quality health care to all their own patients plus many, ? hundred pouring in from Gunnedah ... People on Facebook mention not being able to get scripts refilled, palliative care pts can't get scripts or get seen unless going up to the hospital, waiting- they don't deserve that in the last months of their life! I worry for the elderly, frail & disabled, shut ins who don't hear about changes or opportunities - how will they know what to do when they need to get medical attention? I worry for the nursing home pts that their quality of access to GP consultation must be greatly diminished as well. Please contact me if I can help you further in anyway. I don't just want to be a whinger, but help positively to change this around for my community (and perhaps help impact on other communities too) For example, why can't we have 'pop up clinics' with visiting GP's from Sydney/Newcastle etc and/ or extended care paramedics or nurse practitioners who can help address some of the acute minor illness and script repeats, blood requests & answers UNTIL we sort through the crisis. Especially preventative care & script writing. The NSW govt set up pop up testing sites for covid, am sure they could consider this as an option. Make them see OUR health matters! That NSW doesn't just stand for Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong. Thank you for trying to make a difference</p>
<p>Finally thought I had a great family doctor. My whole family was happy with him. He is no longer there.</p>
<p>For me primarily access to more local GP</p>
<p>Fortunately, we are still capable of travelling to Tamworth and Sydney for medical treatment but very concerned about what will happen when we are not capable.</p>
<p>Gaining access to a GP is proving a major problem. There are medical facilities being mothballed because, it would appear, doctors do not want to work in regional areas. For elderly people it is now the case where a 2-hour round trip is required to visit a doctor, if their medical centre can take you on. A visit to emergency is often the only option.</p>
<p>Generally, the health system has met my needs, but I am in good health</p>
<p>Get more Doctors in Gunnedah, people are dying waiting to see Doctors. This is ludicrous</p>
<p>Getting a doctor's appointment in Gunnedah is fairly well impossible at the moment and it's just not good enough.</p>
<p>GPs in Boggabri and Tamworth are working ridiculously hard try to meet the needs of the Gunnedah Community. People present to Boggabri MPS ED because they are turned away from Gunnedah hospital. People are turned away because there is no doctor to attend their needs.</p>
<p>GPs in Gunnedah are needed! It is ridiculous that you can't even make an appointment in advance. I applaud them for doing all they can, but something more needs to be done. People shouldn't have to drive 30 minutes to an hour away just to see a doctor about a small issue!</p>
<p>Gunnedah and Boggabri need more doctors. The amount of patient to doctor ratio is a joke! Boggabri doesn't even have a practice nurse. The lack of doctors is putting unmanageable strain on our hospitals!</p>
<p>Gunnedah and region is sadly lacking in timely health services. The doctors here are excellent, but we need more permanent doctors, not just a series of locums coming and going. We deserve good ongoing care with a GP who knows our history.</p>
<p>Gunnedah definitely need more GPs. It is very hard when you don't have a regular GP and cannot get to see one in Gunnedah or Boggabri and there is only one visiting GP at hospital who is run off their feet and therefore do not have the time to treat patients properly.</p>
<p>Gunnedah deserves more!</p>

Gunnedah desperately needs more doctors and services around this. We have a great facility sitting idle due to politics. It's not good enough. We are expanding rapidly due to mining and agriculture and yet our health system is letting us down. We have hospital getting an upgrade. Great but without doctors and other staff what will be the point.
Gunnedah has a chronic shortage of doctors should not have to drive 90kms to see a GP. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SUPER CLINIC IN THE HOSPITAL GROUNDS? The doctors went there but it didn't last long!
Gunnedah has always been "backwards" in terms of appointment making. It was alleviated for a little while when the rural health centre opened but has since declined majorly.
Gunnedah has amazing nurses and doctors but there isn't enough to meet the needs of all the people that live in Gunnedah. We need more doctors to help so we don't have to travel with sick children or go to emergency to get antibiotics. Nowhere is taking new patients. My parents have been trying to get into a dietitian for months now but can't.
Gunnedah has had a shortage of doctors for years. This results in either waiting weeks for an appointment or not being able to get an appointment at all. The other issue is retaining doctors. Having to constantly get a new doctor is such an issue for someone with extensive health issues. The doctors do all they can but are exhausted!
Gunnedah has low quality GP service - can book appointment in the next few weeks but "call on Monday and we will see if there is an appointment time available ". I travel to Tamworth and can get appointments usually within a few days A&E is low quality service (<i>details of experience removed for confidentiality reasons</i>).
Gunnedah has very poor service all round for health... we will need to leave town as we age to get the help we need... driving less.... increased needs...aging into our 60s
Gunnedah health is a disgrace. Better off bypassing the inundated outdated system and facilities here and go to Tamworth or Narrabri or Dubbo or Newcastle. I will move interstate to get basically medical needs met by a regular GP rather than be bounced around or have to travel stupid distances on country roads.
Gunnedah health services is up to <i>*putty*</i> (<i>similar term replaced</i>) can never get into a doctor and when you have to go to the hospital there is an hour's waiting before you can see anybody
Gunnedah hospital is a big joke they need more doctors and a on call doctor at night
Gunnedah hospital needs improvement, and the town needs more GPs as the ones we have can't met the needs of the town
Gunnedah is a great town but the one main reason that we are considering moving away is the lack of GP access. With a young family, it is so worrying not to be able to get them appointments as needed. When you are told to go the hospital for ailments that are largely minor but still require treatment, it is of concern, particularly when there is not always a GP there.
Gunnedah is disgusting for health care, no care factor for young or old!! Bludging on Boggabri and other small towns for doctors- I'm embarrassed to say I was born here- medical is like third world country
Gunnedah is growing quickly and needs better services, more services, not outreach services from Tamworth. More ambulances and patient transport services. We most definitely need more doctors, nurses, dental services here on the ground in Gunnedah. New a new and better hospital. There are 4 coal mines in this area, more families and yet the health services are still in the 1970's. We also NEED mental health services permanently in Gunnedah, not once a month from Tamworth
Gunnedah is in desperate need of good health care, at the moment it is either non-existent three to six weeks to get in, try to find help in another town or expensive we feel like our health and well-being are being held for ransom. We are putting off check-ups and checking on ailments because of having to traveling to another town or can't afford it in town it seems doctors for dollars in Gunnedah

<p>Gunnedah is in desperate need of more GPs. I have to travel to Boggabri just to have a 10minute consultation with a doctor for myself and my 2 children. And it makes it REALLY hard when you do not have your own vehicle and also single mothers have a very hard time trying to get out of town to see a doctor because they are already struggling financially. A lot of people and CHILDREN suffer in this town because of lack of doctors. Like the Gunnedah Hospital, you would have to seriously dying to get in to see a doctor! If you weren't seriously dying you are literally waiting at the hospital between 2-4 hours just to be told to go home there is nothing they can do. Seriously the government need to pull their finger out!</p>
<p>Gunnedah is in need of more Drs urgently. The few that are here are very much over worked and a large percentage of the population now can't see a local Dr.</p>
<p>Gunnedah is in URGENT need of improved health services. Overhaul is required ASAP! In all aspects from hospital to GP retention, to attracting specialists (even if only day visits), to all allied and community health.</p>
<p>Gunnedah is so desperate for GPs and allied health professionals. I have a son with additional needs who needs access to a GP on a regular basis. Having to drive to Tamworth just for a GP appointment taxes heavily on his well-being not to mention myself. I hope Gunnedah can ascertain and then retain GPs. We do not need a band aid fix for a GP for 3 months we need quality GP willing to stay longer periods. We also need to look at allied health professionals in particular occupational therapist, speech pathologist and physiotherapist. Also, for these Allied health professionals to be welcoming of NDIS participants. Early intervention is key but with the current GP and allied health professional short falls the child misses out. It comes down to how committed their parents are and what their budget is. Travelling is a necessity.</p>
<p>Gunnedah is suffering with the shortage in GPs in town. The town is growing so quickly with the mining boom in the area. We can't even make appointments ahead of time with some surgeries, always have to call the surgeries at 9am of a morning and have it on repeat calling until someone answers and you'll be lucky to get an appointment on the day. Otherwise, the appointment can be a couple of weeks away. The hospital has had to close sections on weekends due to the shortage of doctors as well. Most times, we are told to go the Emergency if we can't go out of town.</p>
<p>Gunnedah need experienced medical staff to cater for this community</p>
<p>Gunnedah needs a new Hospital no doubt, but we can't wait for that, right now it urgently needs GPs and staffing the one we already have. I have had a number of my kids go to Gunnedah Hospital and despite the great work of the nurses and staff they are let down by the Locums (not enough of them and some of them are of dubious quality) and too many complaints that would normally be a GP appointment are being funnelled into emergency. WE NEED GP's! A lot of them!!!! QUICKLY!!!</p>
<p>Gunnedah needs more doctors as it lacks doctors</p>
<p>Gunnedah needs more doctors ASAP make an incentive for more to come to the town ... the community is growing rapidly, too fast for the current doctors to handle</p>
<p>Gunnedah needs more doctors immediately. If Gunnedah's medical situation does not improve in the next six months we will leave town ONLY due to the lack of appropriate services. How many other people are in the same boat as us? I have lived in remote communities with better access to medical facilities than Gunnedah. This is an absolute disgrace for a town of this size and proximity to 'civilisation'.</p>
<p>Gunnedah needs more doctors, I have to travel to Narrabri to see a GP when needed now, I usually get a same day appointment, there is no reason Gunnedah cannot be like this, there is a perfectly great centre just sitting there going to waste</p>
<p>Gunnedah needs more GPs ASAP having the get a doctor's certificate for a cold or flu and wait 6 to 8 days to see them you're already over the cold or flu so you can't get a doctor's certificate by day 8 because you have no symptoms. More doctors, there's thousands of miners joining and moving into the town surely that grants more doctors.</p>
<p>Gunnedah needs more GPs. We couldn't get an appointment at all in the last 12 months and had to travel to Tamworth or Boggabri to see a GP. That even includes the times when it wasn't urgent and tried booking an appointment weeks in advance.</p>

<p>Gunnedah needs more health care GP and paediatricians Having to wait up to a year to get my child diagnosed for ADHD on top of other special needs my child has Thus far been in circles between all health practitioners for Tamworth Dubbo Coonabarabran and Boggabri It is an absolute shame My child's diagnosis would've already been confirmed late last year if I would of taking her to Sydney But due to covid 19 I wasn't taking the risk So now stuck awaiting the services in our area trying to get my child sorted for school next yr as it was advised that she wouldn't cope in an school environment at age 5 with all her troubles Hopefully my daughter is all sorted prior to her first day at Kindergarten at age six</p>
<p>Gunnedah's health system is a joke. Not being able to get an appointment at the doctors and not being able to be seen by a doctor at the hospital unless they are there. It's getting to the point where i worry about my family and very concerned to have another baby with how everything is. Something needs to be done and needs to be done fast.</p>
<p>Gunnedah's medical services is seemingly enveloped within the culture <i>*Subsequent text deleted for confidentiality reasons</i></p>
<p>Half of these questions I answered no to is because I couldn't see my doctor, so therefore I didn't use them</p>
<p>Have had to leave Gunnedah for all medical needs, GP, private hospital, or any needs at all. Scripts included.</p>
<p>Have not had any check-up or women check-up due to no availability- need specialist to come to town as well</p>
<p>Have used online doctor services and Tamworth doctors as I have been unable to get an appointment in Gunnedah.</p>
<p>Having my second child here in Gunnedah recently had me riddled with anxiety due to the staff shortages and lack of pathology not allowing births on the weekends. Being sent an hour away from the rest of my family and my first born to give birth was an awful thought. I have also presented to the emergency department and been told there is no doctor at all available.</p>
<p>Having to take time off work to travel to GP and allied health services in other towns has been extremely difficult. That said, I am very happy with the GP services I have been able to access in Boggabri, I am receiving a consistency and quality of care that hasn't been available in Gunnedah for years. I feel that if you're not a pregnant woman or a parent, you rate particularly low in priority for care and services in Gunnedah. I have travelled to Tamworth for access to mental health services for years, as the availability in Gunnedah has been limited or non-existent over this time - this once again presents the issue of having to take leave from work to travel and attend these appointments.</p>
<p>Health care and services in the New England are well below par.</p>
<p>Health care is essential service and there should be more doctors in hospitals to admit and treat patients here for cost efficient care and continuity of care</p>
<p>Health service in Gunnedah is highly inadequate for area. Transient doctors at hospital are in the main useless and dangerous. Getting a doctor's appointment is like a lottery for my chronically ill mother and chronically ill sister and my husband and I are no longer able to get a local appointment. Although we were on the Barber St books we were unceremoniously dumped when some doctors left with nowhere to turn but Tamworth. No continuity of care. It is disgusting. I truly fear for my families lives in this town.</p>
<p>Health services are nearly non-existent, and we need to support doctors to our area before it is too late</p>
<p>Health system should be a lot better and easy to get into see all doctors, as they say you have to ring every morning to see if you can get in, so we went to another town for doctors, Gunnedah needs to get better with their doctors services before we go back to Gunnedah</p>
<p>How are we expected to keep a young family healthy during a pandemic when there is no access to doctors in or around our town?</p>
<p>I am able to get appointments with a Gunnedah doctor, however it takes can take weeks to get to see the doctor. My wife can't get local appointments, her doctor has left town, she now has to travel to Tamworth for an appointment, which she can achieve within 2-3 days.</p>

I am concerned about the shortage of doctors & allied health services in Gunnedah. We are fortunate that we haven't needed to use these services in the past year however elderly family members have been forced to drive to Tamworth the access a GP & to access radiology
I am currently pregnant and planning to give birth at the Gunnedah hospital. I have been very happy with private obstetrics offered in Gunnedah but do feel for those who would prefer a public option.
I am lucky to have a GP in Gunnedah - a rarity amongst my friends. However, I do have to wait weeks for an appointment. And it worries me that a doctor is not always available at Emergency at Gunnedah hospital.
I am not able to just travel anytime to see another doctor in another town, so I am only taking my medication every other day to make it last longer. What else can we do, have been at the same doctor's surgery for over 30 years and now can no longer see anyone and other surgeries won't take on new patients.
I am very concerned about having a baby in Gunnedah due to the issues with the maternity ward at the hospital and only having one doctor in town. I am not pregnant at the moment, but it does make myself and other women I have spoken to are concerned about starting our own families with so much uncertainty especially when it is your first baby. I'd like to see this improved
I am very concerned that Gunnedah has limited number of doctors. Sometimes no doctor at the hospital either. As a new resident I have to travel to Narrabri to see a GP.
I am very healthy and have had no problems accessing GP but suspect I've been lucky. Woeful inadequacy of doctors in town.
I am worried about what I will do when I do need a doctor. I have been told that my medical practice (since my doctor left) will not be able to see me, and other practices won't see me either. I am waiting to see what will happen when I need a doctor in the future.
I believe there is a shortage of Doctors in the Gunnedah area.
I can see my GP; however, my husband cannot get in to anywhere and had to go to Boggabri for GP then Tamworth hospital
I cannot access a GP consultation in Gunnedah. I am lucky that I have been a patient at Boggabri for some time. Now, Boggabri has also closed its books to new patients as they are getting the overflow from Gunnedah, so no new patients are being accepted.
I can't even get myself or my children an appointment at a GP within Gunnedah. We at are travelling up to 4 hours just to get them seen when sick. As a single mother is exhausting and expensive
I care for both my parents who are physically not able to travel to another town for GP appointments, one of them has had home visits for the past few years as can't leave the house. I am <i>*age removed for confidentiality reasons*</i> years old and only visited a doctor once in my adulthood. I know there are regular checks I should be having, but I do not have the spare time to travel to another town to see a GP. A doctor in town would mean I could book an appointment in my lunchtime without too much stress.
I didn't birth in Gunnedah hospital as I had gestational diabetes and was on insulin and had to birth in Tamworth. This was quite challenging with running a business and another child.
I don't have a car; I have severe mental health issues and physical disabilities and I haven't been able to see a doctor in almost two years. I'm doing permanent physical damage to my body and psyche because the Gunnedah health system can't get it's <i>*act* (similar term replaced)</i> together. I literally have to move away just so I can get basic health care. it's putting a huge toll on my mental health and honestly if I killed myself because I can't handle the physical pain I go through everyday then it's the Gunnedah health system's fault.
I feel enormously sorry for our few doctors. They are overworked and cannot cater for our population. I know people over 80 who are without a doctor and many people who have had to go to Newcastle for everything from tricky hip replacements to extensive mole removal. We are treating ourselves for burns, infections and just trying to avoid going to the doctor - it is just too hard to get an appointment.

<p>I feel lucky that I have a Dr in town. I know they are very busy and have had to wait for appointment that ended up being a broken rib. I have put off appointment for checkout that shouldn't be put off all due to the Dr surgery being so busy. My health has been at risk due to this. My Husband has not been able to access the counselling services he required. This has made 2020 a very difficult year.</p>
<p>I feel the fact that the Dr shortage crisis in Gunnedah has got to this point is disgraceful. I feel something should have been put in the works a lot earlier than has been, so we did not reach this point. I also laugh when I see the council ads on TV saying come to Gunnedah and live, why would anyone with a medical condition, or children with medical conditions or anyone looking to have a family or looking to retire would move here when we don't have the essential services to meet the requirements of our current population. <i>*Personal comment removed*</i></p>
<p>I find it inconvenient to have to travel to another town for a GP</p>
<p>I find it incredibly frustrating that Gunnedah is promoted as having a thriving economy and jobs available when this is not the case. What Gunnedah has is a two-tiered real estate market where those that work in the Gunnedah Mining Industry can afford the exorbitant rents set by Real Estate for investors leaving Gunnedah residents who live locally, invest locally and have children going to local schools struggling financially to cope. Further to that all these jobs apparently available have brought people to Gunnedah with a flailing health system and nowhere near enough Doctors to service Gunnedah and surrounding communities as it was. What a complete lack of integrity and caring throughout this whole process. <i>*Personal comment removed*</i></p>
<p>I had been trying to get into a bulk billing doctor in Gunnedah and Boggabri for a month. To get a repeat of <i>*a common medication*</i> (specific medication name replaced for confidentiality reasons) I have been on for 10 years. I was unable to get an appointment even after calling most days.</p>
<p>I have a chronic illness MS and have not been able to access a GP even after being at the same practice for 30 years which is unacceptable.</p>
<p>I have a serious recurring health issue. I have had to rely on the Emergency Department at the Hospital (where I have had excellent service) several times during the past 6 months. After being told I can no longer attend Barber Street Medical, including having prescriptions written, I have had to seek alternative medical care in Tamworth.</p>
<p>I have an ongoing medical condition with my lungs. Due to this I rarely left home from late March until early December. I had a specialist appointment in Tamworth in July 2020. Luckily following car accident my son and I were ok within a few days as I couldn't get an appointment to have assessment of neck, back and headaches.</p>
<p>I have been admitted to Gunnedah and Tamworth hospitals and been transfer by ambulance in the last couple of years but not in the last 12 months.</p>
<p>I have been lucky that I had a stable doctor at the Family Medical Service. <i>*We are so lucky that we have the current doctors there*</i> (reference to individuals removed). It's disgraceful that we built the rural health to bring doctors in town, why do we NOT obtain doctors when they come to the Rural Health. Now they put the Community Health in there. WHAT A JOKE. Why do we not Lease this centre out to doctors that will bring other doctors into our town. We are advertising for workers to come to our town, and we have no doctors to support their families. ANOTHER JOKE.</p>
<p>I have completed spinal issues & both my doctors have retired or left in the last 12 months. We need doctors desperately. Please help.</p>
<p>I have driven to Tamworth on numerous occasions to present to emergency to ensure better health care and also to see a GP service in Tamworth. Hospital staff in Gunnedah are lovely but extremely limited and only one doctor usually seems on shift at hospital so won't go to Gunnedah if I can avoid it We've come from rural and remote WA and appalled that we had better health services in an isolated area in comparison to a NSW town that has been an established town for many years and has a greater population. Gunnedah as a town concerns me to raise a family or live long term due to lacking medical services. We travel for surgery outside of Gunnedah and this does influence our choice to stay long term in the town.</p>

I have had good health this past 12 months but as I age the services needed will be greater especially being able to see a GP. I do know of other residents who have been very distressed not to be able to see a GP or Allied Health professionals within a reasonable amount of time.
I have had to take my son on several occasions to the emergency department for issues that weren't an emergency because there were no doctor's appointments available. I feel this wastes hospital resources and unnecessary procedures/tests are undertaken.
I have lived all over the country and health services eg GP in Gunnedah is the worst I have ever seen
I have never had an issue accessing medical care in Gunnedah until my long-term doctor left work. I am unable to remain within Barber Street Medical practice, where I have been for 30 years as there are insufficient doctors. <i>*Name of practice*</i> have closed their books and so I am forced to go outside of Gunnedah (where I have been born and raised) to access basic medical care. This has distressed me greatly to find another doctor that I can access and trust. I have this week made an appointment in Tamworth for APRIL. However, I need medical attention for wound care before then. Where do I go??? Most likely do it myself, and hope for the best, and hope no infection sets in or go back to Emergency Department. I have just started a new job and casual with long hours so that won't look great taking more time off to sit at emergency for something that should be seen by a GP. Where does this end? I am mad when I see council advertising, come live in Gunnedah,...you're wasting taxpayer's money. What family would come here when they find out they can't access basic medical care? Its complete <i>*rubbish*</i> (<i>similar term replaced</i>) and instead of Council doing surveys, how about you go visit the hospital yourself for just 1 day. Staff are amazing and doing the best they can but it's not enough. You need 2 emergency doctors at that hospital every day at minimum. We need that now!!!
I have not been able to see a doctor in Gunnedah for nearly 12mths I have to drive to Tamworth which when you run your own business and have young kids just isn't logistical. Concerns for my children have just gone unmet as we can't see someone local and a trip to Tamworth just isn't something that we can do, it doesn't just take 5mins, it's at least a 3hr thing including the hour there and back and most likely an hour at the doctors. The situation in Gunnedah is becoming desperate and it so upsetting for our beautiful little town
I have not seen the same GP at either Boggabri or Tamworth in the past 12 months. There is no continuity of service and as an older person I feel this is necessary so that I can receive understanding of my health needs without having to explain what the background and symptoms are every time I see a doctor. It is very difficult to do this in a timed appointment.
I have put off getting appointments for things I shouldn't because of difficulty in getting appointments. I now wait until I am in a metro setting, Sydney or Gold Coast to make an appointment for such things, but it is then difficult to coordinate scans and allied health appointments.
I have rung and re-called doctors surgery at 8 am to get an appointment 820 times and then told appointments filled for the day. That is unacceptable. I have not got a doctor in Gunnedah at the moment and that is extremely concerning to me.
I have reasonably good health but continue to hear complaints about reasonable time to access an appointment with a local GP.
I have returned to Gunnedah from the Hunter Valley where doctors are in abundance ...my husband and I haven't tried getting into a doctor here I'm having phone consultations with my doctor from Branxton ...my parents haven't been to a doctor for over 12 months ...they are in their 80s... I'm so shocked at the lack of doctors in Gunnedah ..it is so wrong!! My mum is overdue for a colonoscopy...and needs to go elsewhere just to get referral...
I have seen my doctor in the last year, but you have to wait for 3weeks to get an appointment, so I have had to go to the hospital emergency department just for a UTI.
I have to have annual cholesterol checks but have not had one since 2019. I currently have issues I need to see a doctor for but there is no point as I cannot get in to see a Dr.

I have to present at Tamworth Hospital for most of my medical conditions including my risk of strokes as I have been informed by Gunnedah Hospital they do not have the facilities to deal with this condition. I would most likely die enroute to Tamworth
I haven't visited a GP because I heard the wait was 4 to 6 weeks so just haven't bothered trying.
I know many people who no longer have a Dr in Gunnedah even though they'd been with a certain practice for years. I think the Gunnedah Health Centre white elephant should be used by a local Dr practice who can lease rooms to allied services rather than another Govt office using it for nice offices. This building was funded by the Govt & the community to provide Drs, not Govt offices & community health.
I need a bulk billing Doctor in Gunnedah. I am 75 years old.
I need a GP in Gunnedah.
I need my GP service in Gunnedah while having treatment for 8 months of chemo, as a back-up
i probably wouldn't have an operation at Gunnedah Hospital because all of the specialists work in Tamworth. I have taken my daughter to Gunnedah Hospital numerous times with an ongoing problem that wasn't diagnosed until we went to Tamworth Hospital after a 5 1/2 hour wait. However, the service at Gunnedah was as good as could be expected with the lack of doctors.
I really don't feel like you are asking the right questions. People don't even know what services should be available to them.
I really feel for the Drs and the work load they are under, but I also know other folks like me with ongoing medical problems, not just age, really need regular check-ups and general support. I have a renal specialist I see each year in Sydney for a problem that developed prior to moving to Gunnedah. We hesitate to ring the surgery as we realise that appointments are nearly impossible, and I feel others must need it more than us.
I think that it is an absolute disgrace that a town the size and location of Gunnedah doesn't have enough GPs to service its population. I also don't think that enough has been done about this problem, nor has it been done soon enough.
I was in Gunnedah hospital 2 years ago, some staff not competent others great, seemed like no one was in charge. Very nervous of needing emergency help here with exhausted doctors and sloppy hospital care. This would be the main reason for us to retire elsewhere!
I work in health at a hospital outside of Gunnedah even though I live here. The medical services - that being the lack of GPs - good and otherwise and the hospital really let this town and community down. It is a long-standing problem and I believe very difficult to change.
I worry as now local medical centres have closed their books, yet my child who hasn't been sick is no longer a patient anywhere. So, any sickness we will have to go to ER at Gunnedah Hospital
I would be able to have more appointments for my family in Gunnedah if we had more services available here. We have been in Gunnedah for almost 12 months, and I can't see a doctor here, I still need to book my whole family with my doctor in Tamworth and travel to there on one of our days off.
I would like to have my family GP in Gunnedah and not have to travel out of town for this service. I would like to be able to get an appointment to see my GP within a reasonable framework. I would like some continuity/relationship with my GP (not a different doctor each time I visit the practice). Gunnedah needs several new qualified doctors to service our town.
I would rather see a doctor at Gunnedah without having to book a month ahead
I'd be employing Grad Speech, OT etc & offering for every year of service in Gunnedah you pay a year of HECS Debt for them 🙏
I'd love to keep my business in my new hometown. More GPs please.
I'm certain our health would be better if there were accessible doctors. I'm confident health concerns in my own family are going untreated because we don't have access to General Practitioners.

<p>I'm sure you'll hear 50 million suggestions on how to make this better. It comes down to the doctors not wanting to work in rural areas. We are severely lacking doctors and it's affecting our town majorly there needs to be a deal made with universities that they need to come and do a certain amount of time in rural areas. It also would come down to you would probably need incentives to get people here. It's really upsetting to read everyone's comments on social media about the lack of care that is provided here in Gunnedah because of lack of staff. Someone who works in administration, and I have individuals who call in sick and need clearance to return to work we find that hard for our employees to provide evidence/clearance because they can't get into a doctor as it could take weeks or even a month. The chemist is also picking up the slack where it is needed but a chemist can only do so much. I have heard of people going without medication for ages referrals for a very long time and people being in constant pain or constantly unwell because they can't get into see a doctor. And unfortunately, some people cannot wait 10 hours in the emergency ward to see a doctor to be told to take Panadol.</p>
<p>I'm very disappointed that the GP numbers have become so low in Gunnedah that many people have to travel to other towns, including much smaller town to see a GP. This must be very difficult for the elderly and chronically unwell.</p>
<p>I've avoided making an appointment to have health check-up because I know it's too hard to see a GP in Gunnedah. It's been nearly two years since I've had one I'm contemplating going elsewhere probably Tamworth. My 80-year-old neighbours drive to Newcastle for their GP appointments. We are considering leaving Gunnedah due to the lack of medical services</p>
<p>I've lived in Gunnedah for close to 4 years and from the poor medical services I continue to travel back to Newcastle. Only used a local business for a ultrasound/scan. I think that doctors are in high demand.</p>
<p>If this town wants to grow you need doctors for them to stay. <i>(Reference to individuals and an organisation removed)</i></p>
<p>If you are not a local who is a regular client at GPs, it is impossible to get an appointment.</p>
<p>If you manage to get a doctor it is usually hard to converse with them. Either they don't understand, or you cannot understand them</p>
<p>I'm a navy veteran and I can't get a doctor in Gunnedah! All practitioners are not taking new clients. Myself and my young family have had to be just sick or in pain because of the lack of doctors in this area! My wife has phone appointments with her old doctor in the Hunter Valley.</p>
<p>I'm currently pregnant and do not have confidence giving birth in Gunnedah due to lack of resources, lack of access to obstetric services and lack of access to a local GP to meet mine and my family's needs. I've had to access a GP in Tamworth and have chosen to birth in Tamworth. I have ongoing health needs and would positively benefit from having a local GP in Gunnedah to access. When returning to live in Gunnedah in June 2020, I was informed that no GP services in Gunnedah had open books to take on more patients. This makes things quite stressful when it comes to my family and I needing to access medical support when not in an emergency with having to travel to Tamworth.</p>
<p>In 1966 Gunnedah had 7 doctors in 3 practices. All were long term residents and part of our community. People do not realise just what our doctors do: Consultations and minor procedures, hospital visits, rostered on for ED, work in theatre, anaesthetics, obstetrics, aged care visits, and home visits for a few so ill that they cannot go to the surgery. A hard life for a young doctor with a young family. In the city they just work 9 to 5. No comparison. Plus, if the spouses are not happy they do not settle and stay. If doctors work from the RH building they need to make a living. It is not possible to live on bulk billing rebates. It was set to fail from the start.</p>
<p>In a town the size of Gunnedah it is quite concerning that after 25 years with the one medical practice we now have to seek a doctor in another town, particularly when they are closing their books due to the overflow of patients from Gunnedah</p>
<p>In an emergency situation it is not good to have to travel to Tamworth to see a doctor, or even just to get repeat scripts for ongoing medical problems. Even to get medical certificates is problematic.</p>
<p>in situations such as Gunnedah perhaps pharmacists should be given special exception to rewrite existing prescription for such things as asthma preventives, contraception pill etc</p>

In the 4 years we have been in Gunnedah we have been very lucky that we have remained healthy. Having said that we don't really know if we are healthy as we can't even get an annual check-up. It is impossible to see a doctor in Gunnedah. It is very concerning. I don't know what we would do if any of us got an ongoing illness that needed regular doctor visits for treatment. We would have to leave town. We pray we stay healthy. This town needs more doctors, and this country needs to open up university places to train more.
In the last 5 years I've had several admissions to Gunnedah Hospital, 1 admission to Tamworth ICU & 1 to a general ward. I've also had several trips via ambulance. I couldn't fault any of the staff or services but I'm truly terrified of the possibility of another admission or needing transportation & that's heartbreaking. It says a lot about us as a community when we can't care for our sick or simply maintain medication to decrease the likelihood of people becoming sick.
Incentives need to be given to retain doctors. Free houses, free flights to Sydney. Anything that gives them a monetary reason to choose us over the city.
Is it acceptable that more than 40 doctors have come to Gunnedah and then left in the past 35 years? The answer lies with the people in charge.
It is beyond a joke when our nearly 80-year-old grandmother has to travel out of town to see a doctor.
It is extremely difficult to see a doctor in a timely manner in Gunnedah and we have made the decision to seek the services of a Doctor in Tamworth.
It is frightening to see how few doctors we have in the town.
It is hard to get continuing care if I need to change doctors all the time. I am not sick often but do have issues with <i>*a particular diagnosis*</i> (specific name replaced for confidentiality reasons) that I try to get checked every couple of years, but my records are spread between multiple surgeries.
It is increasingly hard to get a local doctor's appointment I have had to attend a clinic in Tamworth - 80km away!
It is not good when you're sick and needing a doctor that they cannot be accessed locally. Who wants to travel and hour when they're sick? We have such a lovely friendly town I don't understand why we cannot get doctors to stay in Gunnedah.
It is ridiculous that in a town the size of Gunnedah you cannot get a doctorand if you are lucky enough to have a doctor you can't get an appointment to see them.....at least not this month.....ring every morning at 8 am to see if there are any vacancies.....
It is ridiculous to expect people that are sick to then have to get in a car and travel significant distances to see a doctor or to have to present to emergency to see a doctor when the reason is not hospital presentation worthy.
It is super hard with young kids to travel for doctors when one or more is sick
It is terrible that I cannot see a doctor in my own town. We are in desperate need of more GPs
It is very frustrating not being able to access a doctor in our own town. We travel to Newcastle to see a GP but in emergency situations we are without a doctor and so have to present to the hospital emergency room where the staff are run off their feet. The doctor situation in this town is appalling.
it is very hard to see a GP in town, we cannot get an appointment
It sadly is common knowledge that if you need to present at Emergency Department you need to actually travel to Tamworth as there simply aren't enough doctors who aren't exhausted to assist patients
It would be fantastic if more doctors could stay in Gunnedah so that people don't have to travel to see a GP when they're unwell.
It would be great for there to be more doctors in Gunnedah so the Boggabri people can get into the doctor in Boggabri the day you need to get in like before. Gunnedah's after birth care was <i>*very poor*</i> (replaced a similar term) at the 6-week check was super quick because again there was a lady in labour, then you don't get to see the doctor for any follow up check-ups for your baby because there is no room. We just felt like we were forgotten. It's like good luck here's your baby, don't come back

It would be more conducive to my emotional and mental health to be considered to be admitted at GDH instead of being transferred to TBH due to lack of the choice of a GP as a they are unable to cater for any more patients. Lack of services is very disappointing in the town, leaving you feeling very unsafe and extremely unheard by government
It would be really fantastic to have enough doctors in town so they can enjoy bush life.
It's absolutely disgusting that we can't see a doctor in Gunnedah, and this seems to be normal for county towns these days
It's very difficult to get a GP appointment in Gunnedah. Most people I know, and we have the same experience, struggle to get an appointment when you or your child is sick. People look to Boggabri, Manila and Tamworth for doctors; however, they appear to have at least a 3+ day wait too.
It's just so hard to get an appointment. Diabetic appointments are impossible. No choice in doctors. Getting a referral is nearly impossible and when you do, takes 6 months to get an appointment
It's too inconvenient seeing a GP an hour away. It makes me put off important appointments because it's too difficult getting to see a GP: elsewhere especially when you have to wait weeks to be seen.
It's sad to see Gunnedah's hospital become a victim to politics. The government funding and support is lacking so much that management is in total chaos and the people of the district are the ones that suffer
Just one of the lucky few who haven't had an emergency. Had a covid test this week and it took 1hour to test 5 people. Heaven help us if something does happen!
Just try and get more doctors to come to Gunnedah
Lack of healthcare professionals is appalling. The town is rapidly growing and the current staff working for these health organisations are too stressed and understaffed. The community is losing patience, resulting in abnormal abrupt outbursts. That would be avoided if we as a community could gain more access to our health needs.
Lacking doctors so had to leave town for appointments No mental health support for my husband. No mental health doctors. Feeling very alone due to lack of services. Possibly have to leave area as no mental health support for my husband
Let doctors run doctors' surgery, they know how to, we don't
Like everyone else I put off seeing a doctor as I believe there are more urgent cases. I would like to opportunity to just be able to see a doctor for the small things. I have been made feel bad in the past as I have felt like these small things are wasting doctors time ie. iron deficiency or anxiety when doctors could be treated bigger problems
Limited ability to access Gunnedah GPs
Lived here for 4 years now and still no chance at all to see a GP my health is failing and I already know I'll find the same fate as many other residents of this town... ??????? So Sad
Long wait time to get anything done
Making an 80-year-old man travel to Boggabri to see a GP is a disgrace.
MORE BEDS, MORE MEDICAL STAFF, MORE DRS, MORE SPECIALISTS AND MORE GPs!!!
More doctors and health care practitioners are needed for our growing town. When the ratio is 1:3000 doctor to patient ratio needs to be changed. Fast. If I were to become sick and needed a doctor I would have to travel half an hour away to get an appt with a doctor that will see me, something most sick people would not like to do. We have an incredible new health centre with space for many doctors however have none. Something is going wrong.
More doctors are needed urgently
More doctors needed!
More GPs needed in Town at least for children
More need to be done by Government to help with the shortage of GPs in the bush
More permanent doctors
Multiple diseases of older aged group managed by me.

<p>My family are deferring medical consultations due to access issues and inflexibility of appointments. In order to see a GP in a nearby town you have to take a day off work and added expense of travel means that routine check-ups are not being attended therefore presentations to ED occur due to issues being deferred and the condition more serious than could have been with regular access to doctors</p>
<p>My husband, children and I have had to source another doctor outside of our hometown which is quiet concerning as my husband has anxiety and constantly needs to check in with his doctor for scripts and check-ups and I have an auto immune disease, so I am needing regular check-ups also, it's quite inconvenient having to go outside of your own hometown to source a doctor. Also, it's quite concerning as a mother if anything was to happen to my children and we needed urgent care, knowing that Gunnedah is short on doctors is a worrying thought!</p>
<p>My husband and I are still waiting for a new doctor at Barber Street Practice as our doctor is on leave and we have been told to seek a doctor elsewhere until such time as a replacement becomes available</p>
<p>My husband injured his foot recently and refused to go to see a doctor due to the wait time for appointments and the known shortage. He was at huge risk of infection and definitely needed stitches. He's also a smoker so a higher risk poor circulation etc. he doesn't want to be a burden to an already strained health system. I've had conversations with elderly locals who feel like a nuisance when they have to use the ED for care instead of their GP. Please think about a scholarship fund for local kids who want to go into medicine and return to the country.</p>
<p>My local GP left in December and was due to see a Doctor in early March and I kept getting told a locum would be coming but that wasn't the case, now in the lurch searching with no luck. Doctors not taking on new patients, now I have had to proceed to an Aboriginal Centre but had to get paperwork done before. If and when they ring me for an appointment, this centre means travel which is hard on the budget too. This delay is taking its toll physically, mentally stressful plus I am on my last few scripts in the chemist, some I am already without. On top of this my medical certificate has expired and I am being obliged to now do job search requirements which I am not well enough to do this is so frustrating PLEASE DOCTORS come back GUNNEDAH we desperately need you</p>
<p>My main priority currently is to be able to see a GP, especially for my children when they are unwell, in Gunnedah. It is awful having to travel out of town with sick child/ren to be able to see a doctor.</p>
<p>My partner has had a lot of ill health in the last 3 years. Had to see a lot of specialists which included Tamworth, Port Macquarie & Coffs Harbour. Plus, lots of Medical Imaging etc. he has been lucky enough to build up a place at a local GP, but often has to wait a fortnight to get an appointment. I, on the other hand, just hope I can get in somewhere & have had to go to Tamworth a few times. More GPs definitely needed. Can I also say that of all the staff we have come across during his illness from cancer to severe cut on arm & referred to Tamworth, plus a broken/cut foot, they have all been wonderful.</p>
<p>Need doctors</p>
<p>Need GPs and other health alliance</p>
<p>Need more doctors</p>
<p>Need more doctors and access to medical attention</p>
<p>Need more doctors in Gunnedah</p>
<p>Need more GP doctors in Gunnedah.</p>
<p>Need more GPs</p>
<p>Need more GPs in the area to support the growth of the town and surrounding industries!</p>
<p>Need more Gunnedah doctors in Gunnedah. I have to see a doctor out of town, not happy</p>
<p>No available doctor when appointment is needed</p>
<p>No GP service available in Gunnedah. Have to travel to Tamworth for GP. Have to travel to Newcastle for paediatrician appointment</p>
<p>Not aimed at the general public: When did you ask can I see a doctor??? or how long to see Allied Health worker??? Did you did not ask how far out of Gunnedah is my residence/ no access to transport. Very ordinary questions. I am over 65 = hope that is not going to the health review as I will be raising your narrow agenda in this survey</p>

Not being able to get a GP appointment
Not being able to get timely appointment with our GP led to an antibiotic resistant infection taking control of my husband's body, resulting in the life-threatening infection lodging in his knee. Consequently, there was catastrophic damage to the knee, resulting. In the need for a total knee replacement.
Not enough doctors for the population! A new hospital will just end up like the new Rural Health Centre, a very expensive building with no doctors or staff to run it. I have in the past waited more than 8 hours in emergency to see a doctor. A new building is useless without the medical staff!
Not enough doctors in Gunnedah & it's getting dangerous especially for the older people. I've had people turn down jobs due to the lack of doctors in Gunnedah & this affects my business growth & therefore makes us look at other areas to run a business
Not Happy in desperate need to see specialists and on waiting list for up to 12mnths. Need a local Doctor that will take care of you.
Not happy that I had to transfer to a Dr. out of town but certainly happy and thankful to have the Dr. I have.
Not sure on why Gunnedah cannot attract new doctors to come and stay in our area! Is it they really don't like the area? Have we asked these other doctors that wanted to stay why they decided not to???
Obviously needs to be looked at!
Once at the emergency department, we waited for a doctor for 6 hours, by the time a doctor arrived (his plane was delayed in Sydney), 2 ambulances arrived, and we were all pushed back. We waited for another 2 hours before we decided to leave, my 1-year-old son who was so sick that afternoon and we couldn't get into a private practice seems to look a bit better after 6-7hrs of waiting at ER. We left with no doctor seeing him, and I just had to observe him all night and the following days
Only to say how difficult it is to make an appointment to see our GP.
Other small towns like Gilgandra and Coonabarabran don't have a doctor shortage, what's wrong with Gunnedah?
Our area would greatly benefit from a doctors' service that has a more holistic approach to medicine
Our community are desperate for some Drs in this town we are being disadvantaged by living in this area.
Our doctor at Barber St Medical Centre has now left. We have been patients for 21 years and have now been told to go elsewhere.
Our family haven't attended a doctor as appointments are never available. Have used doctor over phone for medication. My 82-year-old mother has lived in Gunnedah all of her life and was told to go to Tamworth to see a doctor. This is causing her major anxiety if she happens to get ill she won't have a doctor to attend to her. My husband had work injury and can't even arrange an appointment to get clearance to go back to work.
Our GPs are stretched. Thankful for <i>*specific doctor's name mentioned*</i> who assists to take some pressure off at <i>*specific location mentioned*</i> , but a long-term solution would be better.
Our health care system for Gunnedah desperately needs a review and action taken. The lack of services is deterring new residents choosing Gunnedah as a new home, it's forcing our locals to look elsewhere for health care which is unacceptable in a growing mining town
Our local GP services are very overworked and very dedicated but if we don't get more on the job I fear our GPs will burn out!
Our need for GPs is urgent
Our town desperately needs support in recruiting and retaining health services. Our family is generally a healthy one therefore I don't believe our data shows the true impact of the current situation for our fellow community members. I would go more frequently if I knew I could easily get an appointment, but I find myself putting off seeking healthcare for my family and myself because I know we won't get an appointment anyway.
Overall, the DENTAL/MEDICAL resources of rural communities don't meet the needs of the people and totally SUCK!

Personally, have had no effect with current crisis. However, the effect on Gunnedah and its people is highly evident in all forms. We have great resources just need practitioners and staff
Please bring in doctors, I can get in to see my doctor at <i>*a specific practice*</i> but <i>*that doctor*</i> is so under the pump you are too intimidated to take any of their valuable time.
Please do anything you can to retain doctors. The shortage is ridiculous and as a tax paying citizen I think it's unnecessary that I should have to seek a GP in another town outside of the Shire.
Please get us some doctors who want to be here and <i>*comment removed*</i>
Please identify the real reasons for Gunnedah's Dr problems and out lack of services People are not going to remain living here or move here Why would they when we don't have medical care for their loved ones? Don't just put a hospital there and think that's going to fix it. Look at Inverell they still have substandard health
Praying I don't need a doctor until all this is resolved. Grrr
Quality of care is beginning to decline as a direct result of overburdened GPs. They cannot write complete notes or remember to check things when so impossibly overworked. Not their fault, but somebody is going to be killed because of a mistake caused by this pressure soon.
Real lack of Doctors in Gunnedah and have been unable to get an appointment. Council advertises on TV to come here but don't mention lack of basic health services like doctors
Referring patients to Boggabri is deplorable
Refuse to go to Gunnedah Hospital - will drive to Tamworth Hospital. Lack of trust in Gunnedah Hospital
Seriously thinking of moving from Gunnedah so as to be able to access GP
Shortage of doctors in Gunnedah is ridiculous. We have moved our family doctor to Coonabarabran to be able to be seen and actually book appointments. In Gunnedah we are told to ring at 8am and hope for a spot. With two children this is not good enough
Significant community health waiting times for allied health OT and paediatric services. Need more private clinicians to come to town.
Simply. We need more GP doctors in Gunnedah that offer appointments to new clients.
Something must be done to get Dr's to come to Gunnedah. It's not ideal that patients especially elderly have to travel out of town to see a Dr.
Something needs to be done about the Dr shortage as it is affecting my family's health. Locals should not have to be told to go to another town. As the town is growing because of Mining, new people should be requested to attend different towns before locals miss out on health care. Obviously this is a State Government problem which needs further funding to provide adequate facilities and further Drs for resourcing. Perhaps more financial incentive for Drs who move to the town, this shouldn't affect the cost of health care for those in the town but financially supported by the government. As an employer, it causes significant issues to a functioning workplace as employees are not attending the doctor when they are sick, causing longer delays returning to work and added cost to businesses in the community. Employees are no longer able to attend for a simple script and medical certificate. This is a significant issue in the community and needs addressing soon.
Such a shame for a small town that we do not have the doctors to facilitate our town, hence why people are travelling out of town to see doctors/allied health. We cannot fault the service we have been provided by our new doctor out of town. It was a shame and a shock to be told by a local doctor surgery no sorry you're not a current patient to go elsewhere. It really hit home for us and made us realise and learn how important our health and chronic illnesses are and there are other doctors around that are amazing and care even if we do have to travel!!!
Such a shame. I have used a Gunnedah practice ever since it opened and now I have to transfer somewhere else as my original doctor only does maternity now, then the doctor I stayed seeing in the same practice is now not working and the other doctor in the practice won't take any new patients. They told me at reception to try Boggabri or Tamworth.

<p>Supposed to go to Tamworth to see a doctor... very difficult if not up to travelling...will need scripts in the near future.... where do we go??? Need driving medical certificate done soon...where do we go..??? You put ads on saying come to Gunny, plenty of jobs etc... this is making it harder for the health system in Gunnedah... should have let the doctors run the one at the hospital...</p>
<p>Surely for a town the size of Gunnedah we could attract staff /doctors to operate a clinic at the big white elephant next to the hospital The Liberal government should follow through with their \$3m upgrade at the last election- the state of the hospital is disgusting!!!</p>
<p>Tamworth Health services are being overrun because there's not enough doctors in Gunnedah to keep up with the demand. Cost of living is so high here due to the mines, coupled with the fact they'll be overworked if they do come, it's no wonder no doctors want to relocate. The only way I can see it happening is if you get registrars and offer them a ridiculous amount of money, plus subsidised housing and contracts for 2-3 years and hope they fall in love with the place.</p>
<p>Thank you for researching the medical services in Gunnedah. While the facilities and allied health services (except for the very limited mental health services) are good, but having so few doctors is very distressing, especially for older people with chronic diseases in need of proper management. We've heard that GPs simply burn out from the demands of running their practices as well as having to service the hospital. Can I also advocate for a palliative care unit in the renewed hospital - travelling to Tamworth to see people who need intensive nursing in their last days is so very hard on families. Thank you.</p>
<p>Thank you to all the doctors and nurses and allied health professionals who have chosen to live and work in Gunnedah. We very much appreciate your commitment and hard work.</p>
<p>The ability to see a local GP is almost impossible and my Mum is moving here with multiple health needs and no foreseeable medical services</p>
<p>The circumstances in Gunnedah is revolting. I have heard that <i>*(comment that cannot be substantiated)</i>; if this is the case, then the NSW government needs to show greater support within the community to help develop stability in the region.</p>
<p>The doctor situation is a joke. We have a great community, and we can't even get doctors for our hospital. We have only a handful of GPs and it's putting pressure on them and the hospital situation. It's made worse by limited pathology services. Means unnecessary transfers to Tamworth just because doctors can't do effective blood tests.</p>
<p>The doctor and staff are making too many rushed decisions in the ED department and missing vital medical problems. Wait times are terrible even though it is as advertised on the local news that 85% of patients are seen in record time. This is untrue in our case.</p>
<p>The doctor situation in Gunnedah is ridiculous for people to have to try and get appointments in other towns is ridiculous. Having a young child now worries me about not being able to get seen by a doctor when needed.</p>
<p>The fact that mine site medicals can be booked at the doctor surgery quickly and without the person being an existing patient, but locals cannot get an appointment is ridiculous. They are choosing \$\$ over locals. Mining medicals make them around \$800. In the time it takes to do one of those they could have seen about 4-5 patients who desperately need to see a doctor but are being forced to drive 60mins+ Out of town. I also don't have a "regular" doctor because I see them once then they leave, and I have to see the new doctor then the cycle repeats. The locum doctors that come are rude and obviously only here for the \$\$.</p>

The fact we don't have enough GPs to service our town population is concerning and worrying. Our health is being put at risk. We cannot book appointments in advance when needed so we don't miss out on the important check-ups we have to have or get scripts. We have to pay anywhere up \$7.00 just to get a script written and if you haven't seen the doctor for 2 months (which is common practice) we cannot get a script unless we see a doctor to check us over. In the meantime, they have to wait for an appointment to get their scripts. Unfortunately, in this time they have run out or desperately running out and need medication fast. So besides not being given an appointment with receptionist when they call up they are told to call at 8am each weekday to hopefully score an appointment or told to present to the hospital. Now by presenting to the hospital it's triaged at lowest triage possible - non urgent. A person is left sitting at the hospital for around 2-4hrs minimum to have a script written. This is due to lack of Drs and nursing staff. The fact that the local medical centres in town won't and don't work together is ridiculous. If you attend one medical centre in town you ARE NOT ALLOWED to attend any other medical centres as they won't help you. It's forbidden. We had multimillion dollar facility previously called rural health centre. Now the great thing about that centre was they ALLOWED ANYONE FROM ANY MEDICAL CENTRE to attend. Unfortunately, it was run poorly and was shut down. The Gunnedah population were told we would be able to have GP appointments on weekends through the rural health centre when it opened. The entire time it was operating it never eventuated. The fact that we can't even get GP appointments and haven't been able to for over 15 years on a weekend for goodness sake is disgusting. Our health system practice is backwards for the 21st century. I personally have had many health issues where my health was at high risk, and I was unable to get medical help in the time frame needed so I travelled to Sydney away from family and support to get the help I needed. **Personal experience with aged family member as a patient at the hospital deleted for confidentiality reasons** How many people have lost their lives due to the inaction of the health care system (or lack thereof) in Gunnedah? How many more lives need to be played with or be unnecessarily put at risk for the simple fact of seeing a GP? Now that this issue is being raised you are now responsible for fixing this problem. The duty of care now lies with you!!!!

The GPs and nursing staff at Gunnedah are amazing. The doctors especially are dedicated hardworking professionals who care for their patients. I am grateful for their ongoing care.

The health care service in Gunnedah is horrendous. For people to have to book a week in advance to see a doctor is almost third world country standard. Gunnedah is a fantastic town however the health care service is atrocious. **(reference to a specific organisation removed) **. Gunnedah is currently being promoted as a town to live in and a town that is thriving. The health care system is a complete opposite. Fix this problem and this town would be the best the state. It seems to me that a lot of the pressure of the current issues with the health care system is being resting on the shoulders of the hospital. I know of so many people who have been told to go to the emergency department at the hospital because they can't get in to see a GP. Very poor and bad advice. This is not the role of the hospital to take on patients who cannot get in to see their GP. The way the medical centres are run is basically useless. The shortage of doctors is not the only issue. The current doctors don't appear to see the issues that the general public are facing. They don't seem to want to make change to a system that may have worked 20 or 30 years ago. In this day and age there is NO REASON WHATSOEVER that should stop a person ringing up a medical centre the day they are actually sick and seeing a doctor. Instead of having to look into a crystal ball and guess a week in advance when they are going to be sick. Or worse still, remain sick for a week until they can get in to see a doctor. Worse again, if you go to one medical practice, the other practices in town will refuse to see you. How unbelievably ridiculous is that. Furthermore, we have a state-of-the-art rural health centre sitting there in town not being used and hasn't been for years. This centre, if run correctly, could be the solution this town needs. When I say run correctly I mean someone could call up in the morning when they are sick and be able to see a doctor that day. The way the rest of modern society lives. Get with the times Gunnedah and fix this problem.

The health system in Gunnedah is absolutely critical. I'm just lucky that my family don't have major illness or need of consistent doctor care. It's very difficult to get dental and doctor appointment. 2-3 week wait for emergency dental care. ie tooth ache

<p>The health system in NSW is below a standard that I consider acceptable for our country. The standard in Gunnedah is well below the NSW standard. Gunnedah's trouble with maintaining or increasing doctor numbers seems to coincide with the opening of the rural health building adjacent to the hospital. With the current workload being put on the remaining doctors, it will only be a matter of time some of them walk away from the town as well. Before COVID I was visiting my sister in Brisbane and we were talking about health services and when I told her I need to see a doctor but couldn't get into one in Gunnedah, she made two calls to doctor surgeries in her local area and I had an appointment the next morning. During the next three days I had three consultations with this doctor and blood tests done at ZERO cost to me.</p>
<p>The health system in this region is a disgrace, not the staff and doctors, but the lack of availability, the lack of stability and waiting times to gain access is way beyond ridiculous. Dental care for those unable to afford the fees charged is almost hopeless and mental health is either dismissed, leading to suicides in some cases, or include police and lock up if place is available. Yes we choose to live in the country, but no we are not irrelevant, and we are just as deserving of good medical care as any other part of the country and immediate attention needs to be drawn to that fact. Incentives and assistance offered to doctors and specialist in coming to the rural areas of Australia is one idea, for governments and those in power to get off their butts and address these ever-increasing issues would be the best idea! Stop always leaving it up to the people!</p>
<p>The hospital and doctors in this area need a lot of work and more of them</p>
<p>The lack of doctors is a concern when family have to travel to see a doctor</p>
<p>The lack of doctors is scary considering it took over 30 days to get an appointment for a possible kidney infection. There are so many people missing out on essential healthcare. We live rural, but still deserve basic healthcare.</p>
<p>The lack of Drs in Gunnedah is not acceptable for a community of this size. The few Drs that are here still practicing are doing an amazing job but there just aren't enough of them to meet the needs of the Gunnedah community and patients both young & old aren't getting the medical attention that they require & are having to travel to other towns to see a Dr.</p>
<p>The main issue is having to travel to other towns because the GP is not taking on new patients. I put off a lot of appointments because of this.</p>
<p>The medical services in this town are pathetic. Four week wait to see a doctor is totally unacceptable. I have never seen worse medical services in my life. God help everyone if there's ever a major emergency</p>
<p>The necessity of having to go to Tamworth to see GPs is quite an appalling situation, not to mention the extra costs involved as well as the extra time taken. Seriously considering moving to another town which has sufficient doctors available to meet our everyday needs.</p>
<p>The northwest regional health system is a disgrace. We will always look to Sydney for medical specialists, and if it's a more immediate issue, we will begrudgingly go to Tamworth base. <i>*(reference to personal experience with ED removed for confidentiality reasons*)</i> We are long time locals so have the advantage of knowing administration staff at the doctor surgery who will go above and beyond to help, but the doctors are overworked.</p>
<p>The pressure on local medical and ancillary staff lead to people not being treated in a respectful manner no matter how hard the medical staff try. Reducing wait times and pressure on medical staff is a must</p>
<p>The reduced number of medical practitioners in Gunnedah does not meet the requirements of the area, people are travelling to Tamworth, Boggabri and other areas to see a GP and the hospital should encourage Drs to work at a rural level.</p>
<p>The shortage of good health care is a limiter to Gunnedah growing. I have spoken to several people who have left the region as they need to be closer to a doctor that they can actually get to see. People, like my mother are not seeing a doctor until the symptoms are unbearable, so we are not trying to prevent illnesses. We feel like we are third class citizens, shouldn't we be able to have the same level of healthcare as our city counterparts? I'm over being a tough and stoic country girl!</p>
<p>The situation as it stands is dangerous and at risk of imminent collapse. It is enough for me and many of my friends to have begun talking about moving away to ensure our families are safe.</p>

<p>The state of the health care at the moment in Gunnedah is far from acceptable. Last year I requested an appointment, went and saw the local GP and was informed they didn't have the appropriate time to discuss my issues. Mental health should never be overlooked, I still have not had the chance to see a doctor, as they all are not taking on new patients this is the comment from every doctor in town. Luckily I have support through my work as I have none in town. I have also resulted in using Qoctor for my prescriptions because I have no other option with my GP leaving town, I really hope nothing serious happens to my family or any others in town as we don't seem to be in a position to look after our locals. It's not uncommon for people in town to be told to go to Tamworth as it will be quicker, or for locals to say this as they have been stuck in ED at Gunnedah for over 4 hrs. I really hope this survey gets some results, enough is enough</p>
<p>The whole medical system needs reorganisation. I sometimes wonder if Hunter New England have enough interest in Gunnedah</p>
<p>The whole town is dissatisfied with the medical services or lack thereof. It took me 17 days to get an appointment when I was sick and needed a medical certificate. Needless to say, I lost pay because I couldn't get one in time for the days I had to have off. (<i>*reference to individuals and comparison to other towns removed*</i>)</p>
<p>There are no GP options available for new patients in Gunnedah.</p>
<p>There are not enough Doctors to treat my family in Gunnedah. We feel it's best to not even bother trying now. It is motivation for us to leave the area.</p>
<p>There are not enough GPs in Gunnedah. I have used numerous locum doctors when they are available so there is no continuity of care. I had to go to a GP in Tamworth which is very difficult as I live alone and depend on my son or public transport. I am <i>*very elderly*</i> (<i>specific age replaced for confidentiality reasons</i>) and I am appalled and disappointed at the lack of health care in rural areas.</p>
<p>There are only two GPs at the Barber Street practice nowadays with one of them focused solely on Obstetric patients. That means there is only one GP available to attend to, and treat, the remainder of the patients at the practice. Therefore, with so many patients requiring to see a GP, it is IMPOSSIBLE to secure an appointment on a daily basis, so, patients must then TRY to make appointments for one month ahead, when appointment bookings open at the end of each month - IF THEY ARE LUCKY!</p>
<p>There are underlying issues regarding the doctors here, not all just a certain practice</p>
<p>There is an extreme lack of doctors. I was and have been a patient at Barber St Medical centre for 8 years, however in the last 12 months they will not allow me an appointment there as they are only seeing clients with more urgent needs that they see more frequently. I am not able to see a doctor (or any of my immediate family) despite being a client there for many years. We have been travelling to different towns such as Boggabri or Tamworth to see a doctor. The hospital emergency is also frequently unattended by a doctor for many hours at a time.</p>
<p>These problems would be very easily fixed by just getting more REGULAR doctors!</p>
<p>Think you know what is wrong with system (so fix it)</p>
<p>This experience was slightly over 12 months ago. <i>*Experience with an injury and services sought in Gunnedah recounted, removed for confidentiality reasons*</i></p>
<p>This is at crisis point, something needs to be done soon. We moved away for 18months and returned but we regret it as the medical care is non-existent.</p>
<p>This place needs more doctors</p>
<p>This town needs help and so does the Gunnedah staff. Gunnedah is growing and getting bigger, locals shouldn't have to be turned away because we don't have enough doctors.</p>
<p>Three weeks to get into a GP is ridiculous. My son's health condition would have been much better had we not had to present to emergency and then get turned away for two weeks until it got so bad we ended up in hospital.</p>
<p>To see a GP is difficult and unaffordable. Gunnedah needs more affordable, obtainable services.</p>

<p>Today a person bought Panadol from a chemist to give to his mother in palliative care in the hospital... where is the duty of care? The other day a 90-year-old woman was told she was no longer being accepted as a patient in a doctor's surgery...where is the loyalty? and that she would have to travel out of town to get a new doctor...a 90 yr old driving over 2hrs every month to get her script for pain medicine...how is this caring for our elders? At what cost is the health of our elders who have worked all their lives paid taxes and retired with their own super who ask for nothing but the quality of life they deserve??? The health system in the New England area really needs to change! It is disgraceful and embarrassing</p>
<p>Too scared to go to the Hospital due to horrendous waiting times especially with young kids. We are now having to seek appointments in coastal towns as we can get in to see a doctor even if we have to travel. The locum doctors don't seem to care about concerns as they move on to another town</p>
<p>Travelling specialists would be a great addition: Endocrinologist, Neurologist etc</p>
<p>Trying to get into a Dr in Gunnedah is almost impossible. My mum called today for a follow up appointment & can't get in for a month. Too many regulars that aren't sick at the Drs too taking up appointments from people that are actually needing the appointment as they are really sick.</p>
<p>Unable to access GP in Gunnedah, have to see GP in Tamworth</p>
<p>Unable to book any appointments in Gunnedah, had to go to Tamworth due to not taking new patients on their books</p>
<p>Unable to get into local GP as all are full</p>
<p>Used Tamworth specialists and Tamara hospital in past 12 months</p>
<p>Very hard to get an appointment with my GP and hard to get doctor's appointment for new patient in Tamworth because lots of people are going there instead of Gunnedah</p>
<p>Very poor lack of doctors in town have made me not able to see a local GP, my 80-year-old grandmother was told to see a GP in another town after being a patient at <i>*specific service named, removed for confidentiality reasons*</i> for the past 30 years. What a <i>*complete*</i> (similar term replaced) joke, I am beyond fuming</p>
<p>Visited Goondiwindi last week. They have 14 doctors, all working out of a single medical centre. Suggest approaches be made to the centre there to enquire about what makes their health service so attractive for doctors. Historically, Gunnedah's doctors have struggled to get on in the workplace. Too many personalities interfering with a professional ethics. I think this has been a major problem.</p>
<p>Wait times for specialists is terrible in this region. Children and babies should be prioritised when needing to see a GP. You can never get a GP appointment and get told to present to emergency - emergency tell you to go make an appointment with GP. Wait up to 4 hours at emergency to be told go home and monitor and if kid's not better in couple of days come back. No change in a couple of days so you come back and repeat process again and again until you give up and cross your fingers that your child doesn't have a serious illness and recovers eventually. Sometimes there has been no doctor and have been told to travel to Tamworth instead. Have seriously thought about utilising our ambulance cover and just calling an ambulance when our baby has been sick just to make sure she is seen by a doctor.</p>
<p>Waiting times for an appointment are ridiculous - luckily our appointments were not emergencies. My children cannot go to the same medical centre as the one they'd previously been registered at has closed but have so far not been unwell enough to require a doctor - I guess if they ever do need a GP we will have to try and find a GP in Tamworth.</p>
<p>We are a reasonably healthy family so don't need medical care often and have been in Gunnedah for 20 years so able to access GP .. although it takes a long time (over a week often)</p>
<p>We are all aware of the crisis in doctor services it must be improved</p>
<p>We are at an age when medical care could be required and now find ourselves having to go out of town to receive any treatment. It was not our choice to leave. Thankfully we were lucky to be accepted by a Tamworth practice.</p>
<p>We are desperate. I have to have an appointment with a GP. I think I have <i>*condition named, removed for confidentiality reasons*</i> but I can't travel, and I can't get into a GP in Gunnedah</p>

We are in desperate need of more doctors
We are in desperate need of more GPs in Gunnedah to share the load of providing timely services to the community.
We are in our late sixties, have to drive to Tamworth to see our new doctor.
We are unable to get a doctor appointment for three weeks at least
We avoid Gunnedah Hospital due to past waiting times & misdiagnoses. We go elsewhere for any treatment when we can't get into a GP or in an emergency.
We badly need more GPs in Gunnedah. It is nearly impossible to get an appointment. I am very thankful that we are basically a very healthy family!
<i>*Hearsay about reasons thought to be behind shortage of GPs removed*</i>
We currently have no GP at Gunnedah and there are none available to see at the moment. It is lucky we have been registered at 2 other practices away from Gunnedah
We deserve access to equitable health services.
We desperately need improved GP and Allied services in Gunnedah
We desperately need more doctors and mental health providers
We desperately need more doctors in Gunnedah! At the age of 71 I have never known this town to be so short on medical care! We have had to find a doctor in Tamworth which is not good if you are too sick to travel the 75kms!
We desperately need more doctors in this town, it's disgraceful
We desperately need more Doctors. We were with the same practice for years, but our GP left and then we were turned away due to the overwhelming demand and not enough Doctors. My husband still hasn't got a local GP to see. Very disappointed in the lack of health services for such a large community.
We desperately need more full-time medical professionals in this town. We need more doctors. We need more hospital staff. We need more obstetricians as there's only ONE working within Gunnedah. There's only so many women he can help!
We desperately need more GPs in Gunnedah and an improvement in the array of allied health services. It is difficult and costly to constantly drive elsewhere to get medical care and testing done.
We do need a lot more GPs in Gunnedah for sure, you can't get in to see a doctor, Gunnedah should be ashamed of that with the amount of money that has been spent in Gunnedah for over the last 2 years and all the mines around this area and you have to go to another town to see a GP is a <i>*complete*</i> (similar term replaced) disgrace
We find the health services in Gunnedah to be a disgrace, we have to travel to Kootingal for a GP. Having worked for Dr. Harris in the 60's it is amazing how the Gunnedah health service has gone so far backwards; someone has to be blamed for this
We have a daughter that requires hospitalisation a lot of the time, if we had local doctors that got to know their patients, think how much time that would save?
We have a facility which seems/appears to sit unused. While I accept that without professional health workers it cannot operate, there must be a way to get health workers to come out here. Tax cuts, extra pay, housing. As a pregnant woman, <i>Gunnedah Hospital</i> needs more maternity staff for its brand new midwives and senior midwives to actually run it.
We have been patients at our local Gunnedah doctors' practice for over 30 years. At the last visit they told us to find an alternative as they would not be able to see us and nor would they be able to write a script. Our doctors are struggling and work around the clock to ensure Gunnedah people have health care. Something must change.
We have entered our retirement years with ongoing disability for my partner, we need better support locally

We just recently moved to Gunnedah with our young family. We cannot get a doctor's appointment locally. To get into a doctor in Tamworth we have to first have an intro appointment, a separate one for each of us. That's six appointments. Intro appointment availability is a month away. Tamworth is a one-hour drive one way. It is ridiculous for it to be accepted that young children in need of a doctor's appointment need to travel 2 hours to be seen by a GP. Healthcare in Gunnedah is a joke and I hate that we've had to move away from our wonderful GP in Charlestown.
We need a reliable long-term doctor with whom I can build a relationship.
We need better access to quality doctors and nurses who have up to date training and do not pass you off as overbearing.
We need doctors across all medical branches. How is it fair that my partner, who was with <i>*a particular service provider named*</i> , can't make an appointment at that same branch? The advice we get is to call Tamworth or Boggabri and neither are taking new patients. I worry for my partner because of the possible consequences of an untreated condition
We need doctors in Gunnedah desperately, the situation is unbearable. Cannot get registered to see a local GP here, and waiting times at the hospital are ridiculous
We need doctors. Should not have to go to another town!
We need more access to GPs especially if you have young children who get sick often.
we need more doctors
We need more doctors
We need more doctors
we need more doctors
We need more doctors!!
We need more doctors and quicker access to specialists
We need more doctors for Gunnedah. As pensioners we need regular scripts and referrals for ongoing medical problems. We should not have to travel to Tamworth. We have lived in Gunnedah for well over fifty years and have never been without doctors. The hospital also has shortages of qualified staff.
We need more doctors in Gunnedah that stay! We need doctor stability so we can get to know them. Our family have ongoing medical needs which at the current doctor situation are NOT being met. If we were able to get into doctors when first needed then our health issues would NOT have snowballed!!! Why should WE have to suffer for this??!! The FIFO emergency doctors reluctantly see you then tell you to consult with your GP about your problem within 4 days... please it too is MONTHS to get an appointment! We have rung around all of the surrounding areas to switch doctors, yet all new patient books are closed. What do we have to do to get GP help in Gunnedah??? Our current doctors are run off their feet, tired and fatigued. NOT GOOD AT ALL!
We need more doctors in Gunnedah!!!!
We need more doctors in our community to support the ones we have, it's a lovely town, the doctors we have are overwhelmed and I praise their commitment, but everyone has a limit, and this has gone on for years, not months
We need more doctors in the town so other family members don't have to travel to Tamworth to see a go
We need more doctors on Staff and more Nurses in the Hospital.
We need more doctors, so we don't have to wait 2 to 3 weeks.
We need more doctors to meet population demands
We need more doctors. I have ongoing health issues that require me to see a doc regularly, howbeit, I am unable to get an appointment when needed and have to plan well in advance. This is not adequate. I rang today and the next appointment is in 3 weeks unless I try ringing at 8am. In the past when doing this I have made, on average, 30+ calls all of which received an engaged signal. By the time the call is answered there are no appointments left. So inadequate.
We need more doctors

We need more doctors in Gunnedah so we can have our family seen to without having to travel out of town - council are advertising on tv about jobs out here everywhere but what about doctors and specialists to care for our population already.
We need more doctors in Gunnedah. We should not have to go out of town for appointments with a GP. It's frustrating having to take hours off work and school to see a doctor in another town when the service should be provided within the town we live.
We need more doctors, travelling a distance to doctors in Tamworth makes it hard when you're not well. Not always easy to find a driver.
We need more GPs in Gunnedah
We need more GPs. So hard being turned away from surgery used to be a patient as don't have enough Doctors to see you. Older residents will eventually need to leave town as no health care in Gunnedah
We need more GPs. We shouldn't have to go to other towns to see a doctor, and we shouldn't have to wait a month to see one in town
We need more local doctors. It's hard to get to Tamworth to go to a GP when you can't drive that far yourself. When you have to go see a doctor and can't get transport over there. No public transport, not a bus or train and only certain hours for Go-Co Community Services.
We need more permanent GPs in Gunnedah and also I think it's extremely embarrassing and disgraceful that the nurses at the hospital do observations and ask personal medical questions in the emergency waiting room.
We need more services in Gunnedah as we have to travel to Tamworth for a lot of doctor services. Optometry, Pharmacy and Physio are adequate in Gunnedah.
We need to drive to Tamworth for any medical or health requirements. This put big stress on us and Gunnedah families.
We need to look at what Gunnedah can do as a town to entice doctors and their families to relocate to town and stay. Our doctors are burning out due to the enormous hours and caseloads they are working, and our towns health is at risk as it is impossible to seek adequate medical attention and is unrealistic to have to travel 150km round trip to see a doctor, which then for a lot of people means taking an entire day off work instead of half an hour for their appointment. There are many residents who do not have transport to these other towns not to mention the strain it then puts in neighbours' towns medical systems as we all descend on them. I personally was meant to have follow up blood tests 6 weeks ago, but I haven't done them as I no longer have a GP due to my family doctor retiring and my replacement doctor going on extended leave so have no idea where the blood tests should be sent
We only have 1 doctor to 3000 people in town. I have had my second child and my doctor had resigned and have been seeing the OB for my antenatal appointments but now I've birthed I can only see a doctor in surrounding areas such as Boggabri and Tamworth
We really need more local long-term doctors. It's ridiculous to have to travel a minimum of 30mins to another town for something as simple as a script, let alone for potentially more serious issues. I have had bad experiences with locum doctors who ignored my concerns, didn't do the minimum required checks such as blood pressure. Basically, they provided the most minimal service as possible. Quality and accessible health care should be a priority.
We urgently need more GPs in Gunnedah also more mental health Drs
We usually have an annual check-up with our GP but haven't been able to do so this year as our GP is on extended leave and there is no one in town we can go to
We would like nothing better than to see more GPs in our town, so that we don't have to travel to Tamworth, we have a wonderful hospital, a new one on the way.. we need doctors and nurses...
We would love to see a GP in Gunnedah, but it's just not been possible. I have critical health issues that require ongoing care and not only was I unable to see the same doctor in Gunnedah, I was also told to go somewhere else. This makes overall management of my condition more difficult, time consuming and stressful.

When <i>*comment deleted for confidentiality reasons*</i> other GPs are allowed to practice in town, the doctor shortage will improve. It's funny that Narrabri have at least 3 doctors' surgeries and appointments are able to be made on the day and they are further from urban areas is suspicious.
Whilst I have not had any issues in relation to the health service, I can confidently state that I am in the minority. Older and vulnerable people in our community are struggling to access basic healthcare and it is those people who often have no physical or financial means to seek assistance in other towns. Our community needs help.
Why are the people in the emergency asking the patients to go to Tamworth Hospital, and why is there no doctor and you have to wait for long hours and in the end you will be asked to go to Tamworth?
Why not contact NSW Health and obtain the data for the number of emergency and non-emergency transfers that occur due to a chronic lack of health services in Gunnedah? Review the system that is failing and make changes, stop expecting health care professionals to work 24/7. Both Paramedics and doctors that service the hospital have had enough! There are two hospitals in the district that place a huge burden on neighbouring towns, Gunnedah and Wee Waa. It is a disgrace; the public should be fully aware of the status of each hospital. <i>*Personal opinion of a service removed*</i> . Rural patients are suffering.
Without further unification of systems within the local health district and general practices there will be no further improvements to our situation. The current lack of teamwork between practices, individuals and the system will not change. I have worked in health for 25 years and the current situation is appalling and angers me. There is no communication or teamwork. <i>*Personal opinion of a service removed*</i>
Would be great to have more doctors in Gunnedah so we can go to them without having to wait months on end or going to ED just to get antibiotics for infected toe etc where a GP could do this
Would love to see more doctors and <i>*other staff possessing particular skills*</i>
Yes I have gone to another practice in Tamworth, their receptionist and follow up care and the doctors have been outstanding, happy to travel 2 hours
Yes we need to create more Doctors in our Community.
You should not have to travel to meet basic medical needs

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NSW Rural Doctors Network activities are financially supported by the Australian and NSW governments