

## **Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales**

**Hearing – 16/06/2021**

### **Supplementary questions**

**Mr Michael DiRienzo, Chief Executive, Hunter New England Local Health District**

**Dr Peter Choi, Director of Medical Services, John Hunter Hospital,  
Hunter New England Local Health District**

#### **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 Taree and the region?

#### **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 Taree and the region?

#### **Q1 and Q2 ANSWER**

Manning Hospital has six palliative care beds within the acute medical ward. This ward is serviced by nursing staff including a Clinical Nurse Specialist. Further medical support is provided by the doctor on call. In addition to having a dedicated palliative care unit on site at Manning Hospital, the Lower Mid North Coast also has a dedicated Palliative Care Team across each Community Health Service in Taree, Forster, Gloucester and Bulahdelah.

The Manning Hospital Level 6 Palliative Care Ward also provides an after-hours telephone support service. Local general practitioners also play a role in providing palliative care services in the area.

In March 2021, Manning Hospital appointed its first permanent palliative care specialist for the Manning and Great Lakes community.

This new permanent part time position is another step forward in providing important palliative care services to Manning and surrounding areas, and will enhance the existing high-quality end of life care already delivered to the community by the hospital and District community health services.

Dr Veltre's permanent appointment will help attract additional specialist clinicians to the region. He has already secured Manning Base Hospital to be accredited to deliver advanced skills training in palliative care, and the hospital is supporting Dr Veltre in securing further specialist palliative care training and education programs.

The NSW Government announced an additional \$100 million in palliative care services across the State in June 2017, plus \$45 million in 2019 and \$56 million in 2020. The 2017 commitments supported a palliative care specialist, as well as scholarship and education packages for the District, as well as other palliative care clinical positions.

Increased funding has allowed the appointment of one FTE Clinical Nurse Consultant Palliative Care for Manning Hospital acute services in 2020-21. An increase of 0.5 FTE Registered Nurse for the Lower Mid North Coast community palliative care service is proposed for 2021-22.

The \$82.8 million palliative care boost will provide particular benefits for regional and rural districts. It includes \$11.9 million over four years (2021-22 to 2024-25) for specialist palliative care workforce in regional and rural NSW, and the Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network. Other initiatives funded through the \$82.8 million enhancement will benefit all districts, including multi-disciplinary community teams to enhance community acute, sub-acute and rehab care for people with late stage chronic and degenerative conditions, and people with disability. Consumer supports and scholarships will also be introduced with this funding.

Improving end of life and palliative care is a priority for the NSW Government, as outlined in the NSW Government submission to the Inquiry. A range of activities have been implemented following broad stakeholder engagement in 2017.

Ensuring priorities are achieved for people in regional, rural and remote NSW is an ongoing focus. Key objectives include increasing access to specialist care and supporting choices in where people are cared for. Details on recent funding enhancements across NSW were provided by NSW Health in response to the supplementary questions from the 19 March 2021 hearing.