



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 2 – HEALTH

MEDIA RELEASE

**REPORT TABLED INTO HEALTH OUTCOMES AND SERVICES IN RURAL,
REGIONAL AND REMOTE NEW SOUTH WALES**

5 May 2022

After 21 months, including 15 hearings involving 220 individual witnesses, over 700 submissions and visiting seven locations around the state, Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health has today handed down its long-awaited report into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional, and remote New South Wales.

The Chair of the Committee, the Hon. Greg Donnelly MLC, said, “Many of the issues raised in this report are not new. While recognising that the provision of health services to an area as large as rural, regional and remote New South Wales is challenging and complex, throughout this inquiry the committee heard repeatedly about individuals and families let down by the health system. The committee heard stories of emergency departments with no doctors; of patients being looked after by cooks and cleaners; of excessive wait times for treatment; and of misdiagnoses and medical errors. This evidence is by no means a reflection on the NSW Health staff working tirelessly in challenging circumstances; rather it is an indictment of the health system that has allowed this situation to develop. However, the current situation facing the residents of rural, regional and remote New South Wales can and should not be seen as acceptable.”

The committee made 44 recommendations to address the challenges facing the provision of health services in rural, regional and remote areas. The Chair continued, “Key to these reforms is a significant focus on governance, including at the ministerial level, to bring about the necessary systemic change. Important recommendations include a review by NSW Health into the current funding models for all rural and regional Local Health Districts in order to identify any service delivery gaps and provide any recommendations for funding increases; the development and implementation of a 10-Year Rural and Remote Medical and Health Workforce Recruitment and Retention Strategy; the establishment of a Health Administration Ombudsman; and a renewed focus on workplace culture within the rural and regional Local Health Districts.”

Other recommendations in the report seek to address issues such as communication and community engagement; remuneration and employment conditions for nurses and midwives; rural training to build the local workforce; the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS); the use of virtual care or 'telehealth'; specific improvements for identified sectors including oncology, palliative care and maternity services; and the development of the next Rural Health Plan.

The Chair concluded, “There is much work to be done across so many areas. In order to ensure that focus and momentum for change is not lost, the committee has recommended a further inquiry to report on the progress and developments that have been made to address the matters raised in the report in two years’ time.”

The NSW Government will now have six months to respond to the committee's recommendations. The committee's report, findings and recommendations can be found on the inquiry's [webpage](#).

-ENDS-

For further information, please contact Committee Chair the Hon. Greg Donnelly MLC on (02) 9230 2280.