

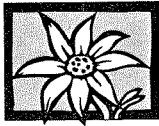
Submission
No 2231

INQUIRY INTO MONA VALE HOSPITAL

Organisation: Warringah Council
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Position: Acting General Manager
Telephone: 02 9942 211
Date Received: 14/02/2005

Subject:

Summary



**Warringah
Council™**

Legislative Council
GENERAL PURPOSE
STANDING COMMITTEES

14 FEB 2004

RECEIVED

27 January 2005

The Hon. Patricia Forsythe MLC
Chair
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney 2000

Dear Ms Forsythe,

Re: INQUIRY INTO MONA VALE HOSPITAL

Many thanks for your letter of 20 December 2005 inviting a submission to the Inquiry.

Essentially, Warringah Council supports the position adopted by our four local State Members of Parliament:

“There should be two hospitals on the Northern Beaches comprising a new general hospital (to replace the existing Manly Hospital) and an ongoing complementary role for the Mona Vale Hospital serving its local community”.

You will also be aware that Warringah Council has offered for consideration the Council's Civic Centre site at Dee Why as a possible location for the hospital to replace Manly Hospital. At its meeting held on 23 November 2004 the Administrator submitted a Minute to the meeting indicating the Warringah position on Mona Vale Hospital. A copy of the Minute is attached, and it will be noted the position essentially is that:

- Any sale of the Council's Civic Centre lands at Dee Why will be conditional on the Government continuing its commitment to retain Mona Vale Hospital
- The clinical makeup of health services within the two hospitals should be left to the clinicians and health planning experts.

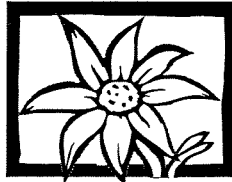
The examination of the Dee Why site is still incomplete and I urge you to seek information from Northern Sydney Central Coast Health on their progress with examination of the site.

Let me know if you would like any additional information from Warringah Council.

Yours sincerely

Lea Rosser

ACTING GENERAL MANAGER



Warringah Council

**SUBMISSION TO
GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE No. 2**

INQUIRY INTO MONA VALE HOSPITAL

Introduction

The need for a significant upgrading of hospital facilities on the Northern Beaches, incorporating a major general hospital, is well documented and precipitated the present round of planning. Such planning, in turn, triggered considerable community debate and led to this Inquiry.

As the Northern Beaches population grows it is also ageing at a rate above national averages. An ageing population naturally becomes progressively more reliant on health care. This and the widely acknowledged inadequacy of our existing hospital facilities – in particular the present Manly Hospital - lends weight to the urgency of the case for improved facilities.

The critical questions in this sometimes-heated debate mostly revolve around:

- the siting of such facilities
- whether they are to be centred on one site or spread across two
- which particular one or two sites will be chosen.

As stated in the accompanying letter, Warringah Council's position on the matter is in accord with that of our four local State Members of Parliament:

There should be two hospitals on the Northern Beaches comprising a new general hospital (to replace the existing Manly Hospital) and an ongoing complementary role for the Mona Vale Hospital serving its local community.

The Dee Why Option

Following Northern Sydney Health's somewhat unsuccessful search for an appropriate site for a new general hospital, the Administrator of Warringah Council, Dick Persson, suggested the Dee Why Civic Centre site as a possible location. Northern Sydney Health had identified the Brookvale area as the centroid of population to serve the Manly Hospital replacement. The Brookvale Bus Depot was listed as a possible site, although there were a number of constraints that made it a less than ideal site for the hospital. The Dee Why site suited the NSH criteria and discussions commenced.

The accessibility of a major hospital to a significant cross-section of the population is obviously a critical factor in its siting, and especially so for emergency services. Put simply, it makes sense to site hospitals where the most people live (subject of course to a range of other criteria such as existing and planned land uses in that area).

In Dee Why's case, it is already a major local services and retail centre.

The other obvious factor is accessibility to major transport routes. Again, this is an essential requirement in the siting of hospitals, but is especially critical on the Northern Beaches given the small number of major transport corridors serving the area. This, combined with the Northern Beaches' relatively poor public transport coverage, reinforces the case for siting the major hospital in the Brookvale/Dee Why area given the area is:

- On the major Pittwater Rd corridor
- Adjacent to the Warringah Rd corridor
- A major public transport hub
- Close to the other areas of major population concentration on the Northern Beaches – the Manly and Frenchs Forest areas.

However suitable Dee Why may be, locating of the hospital there is far from certain as there remain significant issues to be resolved. From Warringah Council's perspective there are four key factors affecting the consideration of the Dee Why site, each of which will need to be addressed if Dee Why remains the preferred site. They are:

- Heritage
- Design
- Traffic flow
- Price

The viability of the Dee Why site will depend on the satisfactory resolution of these issues in a manner that provides the best possible result for our community and that does not burden it with a large bill for relocating Council facilities. (Such relocation may or may not be required ultimately.) Negotiations with the new Northern Sydney Central Coast Health (NSCCH) are continuing on these matters.

It is noted the current discussions and concept design work are based on leaving the Council building, the library and the whole front car park untouched. If the hospital

proceeds in Dee Why it will not disturb the heritage of the buildings or the rock and bush outcrop around the library and the main building. It will not affect the front car park and its trees at all.

The Mona Vale issue

There appears a commonly held misconception within the Northern Beaches community that the proposed hospital at Dee Why would replace the existing Mona Vale Hospital. The stated intent of the Minister for Health and NSCCH is that the Dee Why hospital would replace Manly Hospital, with the retention of Mona Vale.

A related concern, again commonly held, is that were a new, large and modern hospital to be built at Dee Why, the State Government would allow Mona Vale to degrade and eventually sell off the valuable land. Warriungah Council considered an Administrator's Minute at the Council meeting on 23 November 2004. The Minute stated:

The purpose of this minute is to formally inform Council of the current situation in regard to the discussions with the State Government regarding the possible building of the new 'Manly Hospital' on part of the Council owned site in Dee Why and its implications for the future of Mona Vale Hospital.

Over the past six months Northern Sydney Health [NSH] has carried out a range of feasibility tests in regard to what is referred to as the Civic Centre site. This analysis has concentrated particularly on heritage, design and traffic issues.

From the Council's point of view there are five main issues to be considered:

- *Heritage*
- *Design*
- *Traffic*
- *Price*
- *Mona Vale Hospital*

While discussion and consideration of the first four are ongoing, this Minute will focus on the heritage issues and the future of Mona Vale Hospital.

I have been surprised to talk to many people who think the proposed new hospital in Dee Why is in place of the Hospital at Mona Vale. These people have not been aware that it is actually in place of Manly Hospital. I have also talked to many who think that the Dee Why option would be an addition to the other two.

Of course this misunderstanding has suited some of those behind the Save Mona Vale campaign. In their mind it is possibly only a matter of time anyway, feeling that if a new large and modern hospital was built in Dee Why then the State Government would eventually close Mona Vale and sell off the valuable land.

Some of the hostility to the Dee Why proposal from the Save Mona Vale group has been based on the assumption that if NSH could not find a suitable site then Mona Vale would become the new 'major' northern beaches hospital. According to my information this is not correct. The far more likely response would in fact have been to rebuild Manly Hospital, despite the extra cost and the limitations of the current site.

As Warringah Council Administrator I support the statement recently issued by the four State Members of Parliament, "There should be two hospitals on the Northern Beaches comprising a new General Hospital [to replace the existing Manly Hospital] and an ongoing complementary role for the Mona Vale hospital serving its local community".

Their recognition that Mona Vale would not become the major general hospital for the area is the rational and logical position.

I also fully support the position that the exact clinical makeup of health services between the two hospitals should be left to the clinicians and health planning experts. As a former Director General of the Queensland Department of Health I saw too many important health decisions hijacked by local interest groups.

The makeup of health services in an area like this is best left to the clinicians who actually understand how best to organize and deliver the highest standard of health care. This is a fundamental question of safety.

Both the current and former Health Ministers have made a commitment to a two-hospital solution for the northern beaches. The current Health Minister has told me on three occasions that he supports an important and ongoing role for Mona Vale.

This of course raises two separate issues. One is the issue of the very existence of a hospital on the site. The second is about the type of services offered at the hospital.

Dealing with the second issue first. If a proper clinical review determines it is unsafe to continue with acute surgery at both hospitals then the community should support that decision. This type of decision is far more about the availability of skilled surgeons and specialists than it is about the existence of buildings. There are a huge number of health services that can be provided at a hospital that does not provide acute surgery or an intensive care unit [if that is what is finally recommended].

The first issue is about whether there will in fact be a hospital on the Mona Vale site at all. Uncertainty and distrust is so deeply established about this point that rational debate is almost impossible, and the resulting community division stands in the way of any consensus being achieved.

In an attempt to break through on this point I have decided to place conditions on the sale of any Council owned land. I have advised NSH that Warringah Council is not prepared to sell any part of its land around the Civic Centre in Dee Why unless there is a clear and iron clad commitment about the future of Mona Vale Hospital. Such an undertaking will need to include a definite commitment of capital funds for an upgrade of its buildings and infrastructure in the same timeframe as they plan to build a new 'Manly Hospital' in Dee Why.

A second matter needing clarification involves the current thinking of NHS in regard to the location of a hospital in Dee Why.

The current discussions and concept design work are based on leaving the Council building, the library and the whole front car park untouched. If the hospital proceeds in Dee Why it will not disturb the heritage of the buildings or the rock and bush outcrop around the library and the main building. It will not affect the front car park and its trees at all.

If NHS accepts the ultimatum about the future of Mona Vale the next step will involve NHS releasing a further report that will provide the community with more detailed information about design detail, traffic impacts and a timetable for community consultation.

Those pushing for Mona Vale as the area's major hospital have to date been extremely vocal and actively promoted their cause. In response, both the current and former Health Ministers have given a commitment to a two-hospital solution for the Northern Beaches. It appears the message is not being heard, or is not being trusted. Further, there will still be those who favour Mona Vale as the major site and who will continue to push for this. The upgrading of Mona Vale to become the area's major hospital has never been seriously considered by NSH and would be unlikely to occur even if Dee Why were to be ruled out as the final site. This has never been recognised (or accepted), at least publicly, by the Save Mona Vale group.

In an attempt to put this issue to rest Warringah Council has placed conditions on the sale of the Dee Why site, if it proceeds. As noted in the Administrator's Minute above, Warringah Council is not prepared to sell its Civic Centre land in Dee Why unless there is a clear and iron clad commitment about the future of Mona Vale Hospital. Such an undertaking has to include a definite commitment of capital funds for an upgrade of buildings and infrastructure in the same timeframe as they plan to build a new 'Manly Hospital' in Dee Why.

If the Government's two-hospitals position comes to fruition, with a new hospital replacing Manly, and retention of Mona Vale, Warringah has put the view that the exact clinical makeup of health services between the two hospitals should be left to the clinicians and health planning experts who have a detailed understanding of patient care and how best to organise the highest standard of service. This is a fundamental question of safety. Such decisions are too important to be allowed to be hijacked by parochialism or pander to special interest groups.

If a proper clinical review determines it is unsafe to continue with acute surgery at both hospitals then the community should support that decision. This type of decision is far more about the availability of skilled surgeons and specialists than it is about the existence of buildings.

Conclusion

If NSCCH accepts Council's conditions regarding the Dee Why site and guarantees the future of Mona Vale, the next step will involve NSCCH releasing a further report that will provide the community with more detailed information about design, traffic impacts and a timetable for community consultation.