

**Submission
No 80**

**INQUIRY INTO OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF
THE NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL**

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I have been a resident of Avalon since 2005. When we moved here we were reassured about our access to local hospital facilities because Mona Vale Hospital is close and can be reached quickly. Twice we have needed that proximity: when my husband broke his hip falling from a ladder; and when a scan at a Mona Vale Radiology Centre revealed that I had a very dangerous pulmonary embolism. In two minutes I could be at Mona Vale Hospital to receive the urgent attention that saved my life.

I now worry that if there was a similar medical emergency I could not get attention quickly. The new "Local" hospital is 27 kilometres from my front door. For the most northerly residents of Palm Beach, it would be 30 kilometres. I cannot be persuaded that this could be represented as a local hospital for our Northern Beaches Community. It is local for the population around Forestville, Belrose and French's Forest, and I am glad that they have this facility, but it is not local for me. Ironically if I had not moved from my previous home in Normanhurst, I would have been exactly the same distance away from the Northern Beaches Hospital, but would also have had more immediate access to Hornsby Hospital (3 kilometres), the SAN (4 kilometres), Ryde Hospital (11 kilometres), Royal North Shore Hospital (16 kilometres) or Macquarie Hospital (17 kilometres). I think we are being treated as second class citizens. Mona Vale Hospital was built within the recent past because there was an established need for it. I cannot see that the situation has changed with the population growing larger and getting older.

Access to the Northern Beaches Hospital from the north is poor. There is no public transport access at all. Direct road access is by way of Wakehurst Parkway, a two lane road which regularly floods; it has also been totally closed because of road accidents at least twice since the new hospital opened.

I have one huge worry: would my neighbours and myself suffer worse outcomes (eg from a stroke or heart attack) because of the long trip to the new hospital? Can anyone absolutely guarantee that there will always be an ambulance available to attend quickly to each person who needs to be transported from Palm Beach or Avalon to French's Forest?

I recently had a heart stent inserted, a planned procedure at the San Hospital. During my recovery I was a member of a group which told of their similar experiences. Two people had been taken to Northern Beaches Hospital because they were feeling ill but without a diagnosis. When it was apparent that they had a cardiac issue, neither could be treated at Northern Beaches Hospital as facilities were not available for an angiogram and stent. They had to wait for relocation to Royal North Shore Hospital during which time their condition worsened, necessitating a more difficult procedure and a longer recovery time.

I contend that the area previously served by Mona Vale Hospital continues to need a fully functioning local hospital for all levels of medical emergency including childbirth; and after-care for the less serious cases. Basically what we need is for Mona Vale Hospital to be retained exactly as it was before last year. This includes the provision of maternity facilities on the Mona Vale site. We will always need other hospitals such as Royal North Shore, the San, Mater and Northern Beaches to provide specialist surgery and care, but these can never fulfil the need for urgent treatment at a local facility.

Sincerely,

Penelope Kerr