

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 26 July 2019

Partially
Confidential

On 30 October 2018 I was sent to Northern Beaches Hospital after presenting at Mona Vale Urgent Care. They suspected that I had pancreatitis because I was having intense stomach pains. Urgent care were limited in their ability to assist me as they didn't have ultrasound machines and had no choice but to request that I attend Northern Beaches Hospital. I arrived to a packed waiting room, it was chaos. After waiting four hours to be seen I requested an update from reception as the pain was so intense, after being told that it was still going to take at least another three hours I decided to leave and go to Royal North Shore instead, it would have meant that I would have waited 7 hours. During my time in the waiting room others were also waiting in agony. There were people with what seemed to be bad and painful burns and young children screaming. Many walked out that night because they simply couldn't wait any longer and went home untreated or to Royal North Shore. I was seen to almost immediately at Royal North Shore, given pain medication and information passed to my GP for action and testing the next day, it was simple and waiting 7 hours for this would have been insane.

Our family had been nervous about the closure of Mona Vale hospital, we even protested at the rallies that opposed its closure. I couldn't believe that I ended up being one of the first to experience the nightmare that is Northern Beaches Hospital.

My wife received exceptional care during her pregnancy and for the birth of our child at the old Mona Vale maternity ward. The loss of this service is tragic. We continued to receive such exceptional care when she presented a week later with an infection which made her very unwell. There have been other occasions with our baby daughter being ill that we had to use the Emergency and paediatric services at Mona Vale hospital and every time the care was outstanding. We fought hard to save Mona Vale Hospital, the campaigns and community outrage is well documented. These legitimate concerns were simply ignored and we are now experiencing the issues that we predicted. It is vital that returning much needed services to the Mona Vale Hospital site is considered.

Granted, my experience at Northern Beaches Hospital was in those first days, and have repeatedly been explained away as "teething issues". However, in addition to our experiences, there are other major issues with this hospital that are well documented but worthy of reiterating. Firstly, the obvious reliance on the Wakehurst Parkway to access the hospital for those residents who live in the North end of the Northern Beaches. This is a two lane stretch of road, known for flooding. How the hospital was approved and Mona Vale Hospital shut with this major barrier to access it beyond ridiculous. Secondly, a private hospital providing public services is fraught with obvious issues, there is a huge conflict of interest and plenty of stories being told about the difference in care for private and public patients. Lastly, as a final slap in the face, the potential sale of Northern Beaches Hospital to a foreign owned company known for tax avoidance, who could possibly support that??

These are fundamental issues that jeopardise the healthcare of local Northern Beaches Residents. It is important to note that there are many stories shared on social media about the new hospital, some detailing the major issues and others trying to reassure the public that the care they received was excellent. I would like to point out that of course in many cases the CARE is excellent. In many cases, these are our local nurses and doctors who had been providing fantastic care in the former Mona Vale and Manly hospitals. They continue to do so, under difficult circumstances. It is therefore our duty to them to improve their working conditions so they work in an environment that is conducive to providing exceptional care, not forcing them to provide different care to private/public patients or being associated with a shambles of a hospital.

I urge this Parliamentary Inquiry to not just result in a series of “lesson’s learned” for future decision making. Please be brave, force accountability and genuinely address our concerns.