

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 26 July 2019

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Partially  
Confidential

Thank you for your enquiry into the Northern Beaches Hospital. As a resident of the northern beaches I appreciate the opportunity to raise my concerns.

I recently had to go to emergency with my 18 month old. He was triaged for urgent review after he bit and potentially swallowed glass. We waited for 2 hours in the waiting room, together with a few other kids and their parents. I was told that they are trying to get another paediatrician for emergency as it's so busy. Once we made it into the paediatric ED, I could overhear the nurses talking on how they are trying to get another paediatrician and other staff for that evening but that the hospital administration said no as it may calm down again. The staff was amazing, trying to keep smiling and providing the best service but they were clearly understaffed. Having experienced it myself, with a screaming toddler who was hungry and thirsty for two hours (I was told not to give him anything to eat or drink until he was seen by the paediatrician), I feel for all the patients and the staff who are suffering from a hospital that is trying to save money on the wrong end - the patients.

I have a friend who gave birth at the hospital without the availability of birth balls, birth mats and once her bubba was born, she was told everyone could only have one pillow. Anyone who has had a baby and tries to learn how to breastfeed knows that you need more than one pillow to support yourself and your baby. Another friend was admitted with terrible gastro and when she vomited all over the bed, shivering because of her fever she was told they couldn't give her another blanket as there's an allocation of only one per patient.

I would like to have another child but am dreading having to go to this hospital. Previously I had the option of going private with full bells and whistles or going to Mona Vale as a low risk birth unit where I had my first son in a long but amazing birth under the guidance of a midwife. I feel that in the new NB hospital I would be exposed to a culture of understaffing and private style birth, with higher risk of interventions as studies into the Australian birthing system have shown. Our choices have been taken away on the beaches.

Having only the new hospital available to us, it has gone so far that I have discussed with my husband to quit our private (top tier) health insurance and just go ambulance insurance. It will save us a lot of money in the private health insurance as well as hopefully prevent us from being sucked involuntarily into the private arm of the hospital - one where we have to pay out of pocket for pathology, radiology, day therapies and similar when as a public patient that is covered under Medicare/state health funding. I am worried to go there and say "yes, I have private health insurance" and get unnecessary tests and procedure or be billed just because this hospital's only aim is to make money as a privately run facility.

Lack of staffing, lack of things like pillows, blankets, or the medicines, vaccines and body bags as reported in the first few months after opening show that this hospital is seen by its owners as an ATM, with money coming from the NSW government or the residents of the northern beaches. It does not want to spend any cent more than necessary. It may look impressive but it's about the care received.

I am worried about the quality of care due to lack of staff, which was calculated from the day dot as Healthscope knew they wouldn't operate the private part of the hospital at full capacity from the beginning. I am worried that care will be compromised with the hospital's electronic records apparently not "talking" to other NSW Health systems. And although we are probably the most fortunate ones in Elanora Heights and only part of Wakehurst Parkway away from the hospital, I worry about the day where we may need to get to the hospital urgently during peak hour. What should usually take 10 minutes has taken 45 minutes on previous occasions in the morning.

As a resident of the Northern Beaches I would like to see Mona Vale hospital Emergency and other acute services be fully reinstated, including paediatrics and maternity. In fact, for maternity I would love to see a midwife led birth unit that is being backed up by the hospital. I am not against the NB hospital, just against the way it isn't being operated as a private facility trying to deliver public healthcare by making the biggest profit. That simply can't work in the interest of patients, staff and the NSW health budget.

Thank you very much for considering this submission.