

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

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I am a Northern Beaches Resident living in Clareville near Avalon. I was appalled when I heard about the proposed closure of Mona Vale Hospital once the new Northern Beaches Hospital was opened.

My feeling then, which I feel even more strongly now, is that this should never have been an 'Either / Or' situation. The population in the catchment area of the new hospital is set to grow by 18% over the next 20 years and it is clear that the hospital is only just meeting current demands. It will struggle to serve the expanded community in just a few short years.

Added to this is the fact that the hospital was built and opened before the necessary upgrades to the surrounding roads were undertaken - in fact, before the necessary upgrades were even planned and funded; in fact, I'm not sure they have even now? The reality is that for someone living north of Avalon (at say Whale Beach) they will struggle to get to the hospital in under 40 mins during normal daytime traffic - more during peak hours - as both approach roads (Mona Vale Road and Lakehurst Parkway) are single lane roads subject to significant congestion (the latter frequently closed due to flooding during wet weather periods).

We are now more aware than ever of the importance of 'the Golden Hour' - the current situation means that most of that time will be swallowed up sitting in traffic getting to the hospital in situations when people have not called an ambulance because they may not realise the gravity of the situation they are faced with - during the early stages of a stroke or heart attack for example. Lives may be lost.

With an increasingly ageing population other issues come into play. Should someone elderly require a stay in the new hospital, they run the very real risk of having few visitors because the public transport access to the hospital is so poor. Again, anyone living north of Avalon would need to take a bus all the way to Dee Why before changing to another bus to get to the hospital - a total journey time of 1 hour 20 mins - each way! Too much for someone elderly and frail to do on a daily basis if their husband or wife was in the hospital.

For the residents on the Northern Beaches, we are now being faced with the withdrawal of a local hospital which, though run down, was an important facility for the community and has saved countless lives.

I am deeply uneasy about the private/public sector model as I feel it is too open to a gradual erosion of services to the public as well as the very real possibility that the prices charged to the public purse will surreptitiously increase once there is no other option open to meet the needs of public patients.

I personally feel that the cost of upgrading the current hospital would be a sensible investment in ensuring that the needs of a growing population continue to be met rather than having to commit to the much greater expenditure of building additional hospital premises in the future when it becomes clear that the current Northern Beaches Hospital is unable to meet demand.

Yours sincerely

Heidi Todd