

**Submission
No 129**

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

Name: Mr Keith Woodward

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Submission to the Committee overseeing the Inquiry into the Operations and Management of the Northern Beaches Hospital

My name is Keith Woodward and I live in Avalon Beach.

I am concerned with many aspects of health services on the Northern Beaches since two hospitals, Manly and Mona Vale, have been replaced with one hospital. These concerns include but are not limited to:

- Two public hospitals being replaced with one privately run hospital that now serves a larger area
- The loss of public beds
- The increased waiting times for care
- Opening the new hospital before it had been properly commissioned
- Failure to upgrade road-works prior to opening the new hospital
- The poor ambulance service in our area

By far the worst issue is one of logistics leading to the risk of increased loss of lives.

Several months after the new Northern Beaches Hospital opened, my wife became ill late at night and required hospital attention.

I passed the site of the old Mona Vale hospital in 11 minutes. Late at night with no traffic, it took 37 minutes to arrive at the new hospital.

We could have called an ambulance but the waiting time on the northern peninsular can be extreme and residents have lost faith in the ambulance system because of delays. Ambulances based in Avalon are sent all over Sydney and with restricted and overloaded road access to the northern peninsular, waiting for an ambulance can put lives at risk.

There is only one practical route from Avalon to the new hospital and that is via Wakehurst Parkway. This has one lane each way, is winding with large lengths of double unbroken lines but it is subject to closure due to flooding.

The Governments have talked about raising the road to make flood resistant and widening it to two lanes each way but nothing has happened. Perhaps this should have been done prior to opening the new hospital.

Even with an upgraded, flood resistant road, it takes too long to get a stroke or heart attack patients or a mother about to deliver a baby to get safely to the new hospital.

This situation is unacceptable. Every Sydney resident should have fast access to emergency health care when needed.

Rather than demolishing the Mona Vale hospital, the government should recognise the needs of residents and open a proper emergency facility (not a first aid station) at Mona Vale hospital including scanning facilities to ascertain stroke and heart attack responses, operating theatres to respond quickly to life-threatening situations and a maternity ward.

Surely this is not too much for residents to ask for.

I also call on the Committee to properly investigate and publish data on DOA (dead on arrival) data at the Northern Beaches hospital compared to like statistics from Manly and Mona Vale hospitals. We have a right to know how our hospital is performing against many benchmarks but reports have indicated that the new hospital is not collecting or releasing statistical details.

A final comment:

My wife was discharged from the new hospital in the early hours of the morning. At around 5 am her stomach pains became significantly worse and I tried to phone the emergency department at the new hospital where we had been only hours before. I dialled the number for emergency and got a recorded message asking me to key in the extension number of the person that I needed to talk to. The phone then timed itself out.

When we arrived at the hospital a second time in a few hours we were told that there was no record of my wife having been there. One nurse who had assisted my wife was leaving after her shift and gave the new nurse some notes that she had recorded by hand because their systems were unreliable.

The performance of our government is not acceptable and lives are at more risk now than when we had two old hospitals. We need proper life-saving medical facilities that are available within a reasonable time frame.

Keith Woodward
Avalon Beach
NSW 2017

The medical staff were performing well but were hampered by systems problems.