

**Submission
No 158**

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

Name: Carol Moran

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Mona Vale Hospital must be returned to the community as a level 5 hospital complete with Emergency, ICU, maternity, surgical and paediatric facilities. The population requires it, the geographical remoteness requires it. I have had four children at Mona Vale Hospital with the third child 6 weeks premature. The proximity and level of expert care available at MVH enabled me to attend to both my family at home and to breastfeed and care for my new baby who had to remain in hospital. He and I spent the first year in and out of MVH as he struggled with breathing issues. With four children we have had many visits to MVH over the years, some serious.

I have since had a stroke at the age of 52 and again the proximity, facilities and expertise of MVH was instrumental in my return to health. All visits have been positive providing my family with expert care and have developed a level of deep confidence in our public health system for my family.

My family have attended many protests in support of the retention of MVH, including the 2001 Rat Park protest and more recently at the Pittwater RSL and have signed petitions, including the one tabled in NSW parliament. The community are both angry and disillusioned.

The demise of MVH to no more than a 24 hour medical centre is an atrocious betrayal of this trust the community has felt, knowing that a lvl 5 public hospital was readily accessible to them. The fiasco that is the Northern Beaches Hospital has completely eroded this trust in the health services that are being provided by this government in the short time it has been functioning. Actions re MVH are in complete contravention of assurances given to the Pittwater Community by the Liberal government, by both Rob Stokes and Brad Hazzard, that MVH would be retained as a Lvl 5 Hospital.

The inquiry into the operation of the NBH is absolutely welcomed. The premise of the public/private hospital model is seriously flawed. The staff have been put under enormous professional and personal stress due to the total mismanagement of the hospital's establishment, inadequate staffing and procedural shortcomings. The total lack of transparency of the functioning of the NBH due to private operations falling outside the public health domain has enabled the NBH to operate in a manner of serious detriment to the health of patients who have no option but to enter through it's doors.

I have three requests of this Inquiry

1. Examine and rescind the decision to downgrade MVH.
2. Recommend the refurbishment and restoration of Lvl 5 services to MVH immediately.
3. Remove NBH from the private sector and ensure it receives the funding it requires to operate successfully as a Public Hospital.

I appreciate the opportunity to formally make this submission and remain hopeful that this process will be used to restore MVH's Lvl 5 public hospital services to Pittwater and residents.