

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

**Name:** Mrs Ann Sharp

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Earlier this year we had the occasion to visit a patient in the mental health section of the Northern Beaches Hospital. The patient was admitted to the public ward (3C) and subsequently transferred to the private ward (3b). Here are some observations:

The rooms are spacious, comfortable and clean.  
The staff were friendly and helpful.

The ward felt enclosed and confined, as there is no access to open space.  
The outdoor area was partially enclosed with a few pot plants but no garden.

In the public ward (3C)  
The range of activities and common room was somewhat sterile.

There were two large screens, and a small assortment of board games and jigsaw puzzles.  
However, there were few books and a lack of facilities for physical activity.  
Also, the public ward had no organised activities or classes.

The feedback from the patient was that the ward was 'traumatisingly boring'.

In the private ward (3B)  
Table tennis table provided for some physical activity.  
Group classes or activities were also provided in the morning and afternoon.  
A proviso was that attendance is required at the classes to be eligible to stay in the private ward.  
(Hospital does not receive funding from private health insurer if patient is not attending classes.)  
However, if sedatives are given in the morning, this made the patient drowsy and it was difficult to be alert to attend or stay awake in class. Therein lies a problem.

We do not know if the nurses administering the medication had additional training in mental health. Mental health nurses are better equipped to deal with the behavioural symptoms of patients.

If released for free time, the heavy traffic and roads around the hospital are a concern. No escorted leave was provided – only with family member.

#### Re Discharge Summary

The discharge summary is rife with abbreviations, such that it reads like hieroglyphics to the average patient. Providing a more legible summary would mean replacing some of the more obscure abbreviations with actual words. Comprehension is not worth sacrificing for the sake of ultra-brevity in the use of letters.

Re Manly Hospital site: It is important that this site is retained for community health purposes. The location and surrounds are suited to health, including rehabilitation and mental health. Adaptive reuse of structurally sound existing facilities should be considered.

The former East Wing at Manly Hospital had a similar internal area of shared space, which adjoined a small outdoor courtyard. The common area contained a table tennis table, books, piano and a notice board with daily group activities and escorted walks. The mental health facility at NBH has replaced the former rehab facility at Mosman Private Hospital and the public wards at Manly. However, additional facilities are likely to be needed for the Northern Beaches.