

**Submission
No 148**

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

Name: Ms Sue Martin

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Inquiry into the operation and management of the Northern Beaches Hospital Terms of Reference

1. That Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health inquire into and report on the operation and management of the Northern Beaches Hospital, and in particular:

(d) standards of service provision and care at the hospital,

(f) the impact of the hospital on surrounding communities and health facilities, particularly Mona Vale Hospital, Manly Hospital and Royal North Shore Hospital,

As someone who has lived in the Pittwater area since 1961, I am dismayed by the loss of Mona Vale Hospital and angered by the duplicity of the local member Rob Stokes. The battle to save the hospital has been waged over 20 years but I, like many locals, was lulled into a false sense of security by the promise by local member, Rob Stokes, that Mona Vale Hospital would not close. I did not realise he was using semantics. I am angered that all along he knew that the acute services of Emergency, Maternity, Paediatrics and Surgery were to be closed leaving little more than a glorified medical centre.

I am now seventy years old and my husband is eighty and I am fearful.

I am fearful:

- because the nearest Emergency Department is now a long way away. We are as close to our nearest hospital as are people living in Bondi and they certainly have more hospitals to choose from that we do.
- because whereas it was easy to get to Mona Vale Hospital by car or bus, it now requires driving along either single lane Wakehurst Parkway, subject to traffic jams, floods and bush fires or Mona Vale Road which is also subject to traffic jams and bush fires. Travelling by bus requires at least two buses and will take more than an hour.
- because the services such as a stress test for which I used to be bulk billed are now incurring significant costs.
- because NBH seems to be a private hospital which reluctantly accepts public patients whereas Mona Vale was a public hospital which accepted private patients. A friend who needed a colonoscopy was told that the wait as a public patient will be nine months. Previously at Mona Vale Hospital, as a public patient, he waited about four weeks.
- because NBH does not seem geared for emergency admissions, being more comfortable with procedures booked ahead of time.
- because of what seems to be uncaring treatment of patients. A 91-year-old friend who fractured two ribs was told she would be taken home after three nights, despite her request to stay longer, even as a private patient, because she lives on her own and was in pain.

This was despite information on the NBH website.

The admitting nurse will discuss your home environment and plans for discharge, and screen those patients who may need additional care planning. [General patient Information Discharge from hospital](#)

Her niece, (next of kin), who lives in Kiama was rung and told her aunt was to be discharged. Despite the niece pointing out that the patient lived on her own, her 91-year-old aunt was taken by ambulance late afternoon. By the time they arrived at her home in Avalon, it was dark. She was seen into her house and left alone to fend for herself.

- because there do not seem to be enough competent and caring staff. Another friend visited an elderly patient in early July. Her friend complained of being cold. The only bed covering was a sort of

quilt and so my friend asked a nurse for a blanket. She was told they don't have blankets. In the end they found a towel for the elderly lady to put around her shoulders!

- because there are no phones in the wards, with the result that patients can be quite cut off from family and friends. NBH claims everyone has mobile phones!

Mona Vale Hospital must be reopened as a Level 3 Hospital to support and complement the services at Level 5 Northern Beaches Hospital which will hopefully improve in time.

Other hospitals in NSW which are of similar age or older have been refurbished and renovated, I can only assume that because the majority of voters on the Northern Beaches support the Liberal Party and the land is very desirable, a decision based on political rather than on health grounds was made to close the hospital.

Sue Martin

28 July 2019