

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

## Patient Feedback

Recently my husband and I have both been inpatients at the Northern Beaches Hospital. Our experiences - one emergency, the other elective surgery - were overwhelming positive, though there are some issues that we would like to put on the record. These chiefly relate to my pre-operative pain management and to gaps in the provision of information to patients.

In late May, I was admitted from an ambulance to A & E, after a nasty fall that resulted in a badly broken shoulder and gashed hand. I was very impressed with the efficiency of the A & E department in terms of triage, prompt X-rays and other tests. All staff were kind, professional and communicative and I felt very safe in their care. Later that night I was transferred to a ward pending surgery, which was planned for the next day.

I was 'nil by mouth' until about midday, when I was informed by a nurse that 'bad news': my surgery had to be postponed by a day. Two explanations were given for this:

1. The orthopaedic surgeon needed a particular type of fixing for my shoulder surgery that had to be obtained.
2. As I required both orthopaedic surgery and plastic surgery for my hand, two specialists had to be co-ordinated.

At that point I was in a shared room, even though we have top hospital cover. Later that afternoon I asked about moving to a single room, because I was becoming quite distressed in a very noisy location, being in a lot of pain and unable to sleep. Thankfully a quiet single room was arranged within a few hours.

My only substantive issue about my pre-operative treatment relates to inadequate pain relief. With my humerus twisted and broken in four places, I would have expected pain medication to be given routinely. However, I repeatedly had to call a nurse and was then asked to describe my pain level on a scale from 1-10. (I started to feel I was being treated as a potential drug addict, rather than someone in acute pain.) By the time all the checks were done and I received the medication, there were several 1-2 hour gaps when my pain was severe.

I finally had surgery the following morning, about 36 hours after my arrival. This all went very well, and the post-operative care and pain management (including self-administration) were fine. All the staff were helpful and responsive - I cannot speak highly enough of them.

My final comment about the hospital is that some of its design is 'form over function'. For example, with various drips attached, it was a stretch to reach the toilet. With my particular injuries, I could not access the toilet roll when seated. Also, an orderly told me that some of the corridors are too narrow for two beds to pass.

Last week my husband had a hip replacement operation at NBH. This procedure went smoothly and he was also very impressed by the dedication of the staff.

I was surprised to discover that there was a choice of meals able to be selected via the TV. The food he enjoyed was top quality. I just wish I had been told about the meal choices when I was a patient.

By chance I also found out, just two days before my husband was discharged, that parking concessions were available for holders of the seniors health care card. Had we been made aware of this when I was admitted, we could have saved about \$100 on visitor parking over our two stays. There is a list of concession prices at the entrance to the parking station, but no information as to who is eligible or how to find out.

No doubt there are more significant issues at the Hospital still needing attention, as some of the submissions from medical professionals identify. While we found it to be a first class facility from a medical treatment perspective, there is clearly room for improvement in regard to administration. However, in spite of the matters outlined above, we are very pleased to have this new hospital just ten minutes drive from home.