

**Submission  
No 194**

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

**Organisation:** Clareville and Bilgola Plateau Residents Association Incorporated  
**Date Received:** 30 July 2019

---

# CABPRA

## QUESTIONS FOR THE NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL

As an organisation which represents a significant number of residents in one of the most popular areas of the Northern Beaches, we have observed the reports of problems associated with the opening of the new Northern Beaches Hospital (NBH) with increasing alarm.

A brand new hospital with state of the art medical technology can only be a place of medical care and healing with a culture which encourages passionate, effective and caring staff.

It seems there has been a major breakdown in creating this kind of caring environment and it is vital for us on the Northern Beaches to understand why.

The questions start at the top. How much experience does the controlling company have in creating and administering hospitals? Who on the board of directors has hospital experience? Or as an offshore based asset management company, is their focus more on profit and offshore tax management?

## STAFFING

We believe this enquiry will have a solid submission by the Nurses Union which may be able to corroborate the anecdotal evidence we have heard from previous employees of Manly Hospital. They have reported that the initial lack of certainty for staff at Manly and Mona Vale hospitals contributed to distrust of the original administration company, Healthscope. It is suggested that Healthscope guaranteed positions to staff at both hospitals but would not confirm these jobs right up to the opening date of the NBH. Experienced staff were left in limbo until the union stepped in. It is also alleged that Brookfield, the new managing company, lacked medical recruitment experience and so they put the emphasis on hiring applicants with post graduate degrees. This meant that highly competent department heads who may have had more than 20 year's experience did not qualify for the same job in the new hospital and a degree qualified person would have been given preference.

In the run-up to the opening of the NBH, community sentiment and support to both hospitals was strong demonstrated by a number of public demonstrations and rallies. At these gatherings, it was obvious that our local residents were impressed with nurses and doctors at Manly and Mona Vale. Why wasn't it then, a top priority to keep these effective healthcare operations together and transfer qualified staff to the same positions. It would have been highly effective and kept team morale high. The importance of keeping motivated nursing staff together should have been acknowledged as a top priority but the fact that they were ignored seems to point to a lack of experience this company has in this area. This may have contributed to problems in creating a new culture of care at the NBH.

# CABPRA

Furthermore, the drive for the recruitment of staff from the UK needs to be examined. We would appreciate the committee ascertaining the numbers of doctors and nurses who have been hired from overseas and why.

We would also like the committee to examine if there is a bias to the hiring of contract based staff versus permanents and look further into whether this was an attempt to bypass the Medical Unions and reduce their presence. We would also like the Enquiry to examine if staff shortages are leading to large numbers of agency nurses being engaged with a subsequent lack of continuity of care, with problems moving nurses from MVH at Level 3 or 4 to NBH at Level 5.

## BED NUMBERS.

We would like the Enquiry to question the assertion that there was only a 5% increase in beds from the numbers previously provided by Manly and Mona Vale hospitals combined. This is critical given that the catchment for the NBH is far greater and the hospital is now at capacity. This is a big factor in urging the State Government not to lease off the land at Mona Vale Hospital and so make it impossible to have a new full service hospital on this site at some future date.

We understand that major services are still unavailable at the NBH including: cardio-thoracic surgery; angiograms (unavailable to public patients outside business hours); stenting (available for private patients only), neurosurgery and therefore major trauma treatment unavailable and inadequate medical oncology. The State Government has promised Pittwater residents that they would no longer need to travel to the Royal North Shore Hospital for these services. We would urge the committee to look into the number of services where public patients won't be provided at NBH and still will have to go to RNS.

Over the past few months, there has been a giant loss of faith by the public, nurses and doctors with the NBH due to a number of factors that have compromised the efficient operation of the new hospital.

Even with the public relations spin by both State Government and management of the hospital, reports of botched operations, a breakdown of pathology reporting and lack of services has the residents of the northern peninsula anxious about the state of the NBH. Is this a model that can provide safe healthcare and the one big question we have is "with a company so driven by profit and finance can it or will it ever reinvest in staying current with equipment, upgrades and staff ratios"