

Submission
No 207

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

27th July 2019

Submission to the committee overseeing the inquiry into the operations and management of the Northern Beaches Hospital.

Dear Officer,

My name is . I am a resident in Avalon Beach and a local CPA accountant here. I am writing to let you know the distress and bewilderment I feel as an Avalon resident to lose our local Mona Vale hospital. It is inconceivable that with all the population growth we have experienced and that is planned for our area that you would remove a local hospital and replace it with a hospital at least half an hour to an hour and a half further away.

The half hour I refer to above means that we now travel past Mova Vale Hospital (MVH) hospital where there is relatively little traffic and have to drive along the Wakehurst Parkway which has severe traffic problems and is even completely closed when it rains heavily. So that half an hour extra is a minimum and it could easily be an hour and a half on top of the time it takes us to get to MVH.

The extra journey we need to undertake to the NBH is through Narrabeen which is experiencing more traffic than ever before and then the Wakehurst Parkway which is known locally as one of the worst traffic snarls in-between the northern Beaches and Sydney, especially at certain times of the day. The Wakehurst Parkway has shocking traffic jams on the way North to the city in the mornings. You are literally at a standstill for the last 2 kilometres of the Wakehurst Parkway before you can reach the NBH. You hardly move and it takes around half an hour to an hour to get off that last 2kms of the Wakehurst Parkway.

The only other way to get to the hospital is up Mona Vale Rd or to go all the way to Dee Why and then cut back across to the hospital. Both of these options are just as bad or worse for traffic. Then we have the situation that whenever it rains heavily the Wakehurst Parkway is completely closed. The other routes become even more crowded.

Each time local residents have to go to the NBH it is gut wrenchingly sad going past our old hospital at Mova Vale that for generations has served our local community as a close and amazing hospital that was so highly valued by our community. If anybody is really sick or hurt now they wouldn't dare try and take on the traffic and extended journey to the NBH in their own car at peak traffic

times. The only way to get through the traffic jam would be in an ambulance with the siren blazing on the wrong side of the road.

I know and I will predict here in this public submission that local people in our area will die on the way to the NBH. We used to be able to get to MV hospital in 20 minutes to half an hour and now people will die due to the extra half an hour to hour and a half time to get to the NBH. If there is an acute medical emergency the sooner you get appropriate high level care at hospital the better your chance of survival. Residents from my area will be pushing well over the hour mark to get to the NBH and I've heard from experts that the chance of surviving many medical emergencies relies on getting to hospital within that first hour.

There were thousands of local residents at the protest rallies to try and save MVH. I went to one rally in Mona Vale. Most people didn't even believe that it would really happen. It just seems so ridiculous that back in the 1960s people had the foresight to see the need for a local hospital in our area and now the population has exploded and is still growing fast and then came the absurd idea to demolish our local MVH. It is absolutely shocking for our residents and we are so sad, angry and in disbelief that this seems to be going ahead.

Then there comes the issue of whether or not, the NBH a private company I believe run through a trust in the Cayman Islands that nobody will tell us who the beneficiaries are, can run a hospital and care for our community better than a 50 year established local first grade one hundred percent public hospital. I know what the poor patient who had the wrong half of his bowels removed a few weeks ago at the new NBH would have to say about that.

When I was at the new NBH hospital just in these last couple of weeks I found it very confusing how you can be in a public hospital one second and then walk across the hall and be in a private company area the next. I recently had a baby at the NBH hospital which my wife and I went to as a public patients. When we needed blood tests during our pre-natal visits, we were sent across the hall to a private pathology company that wanted to charge us money for the tests. I'd like to know what the relationship with all the private company providers is with the private owner of the NBH hospital. Are these companies related? What is the nature of financial influence and perverse economic incentives between these private entities?

There seems to me to be a big financial incentive to minimise the provision of care through the public system and push it into the private companies working within the hospital. I had to pay up front just under two hundred dollars for the blood tests I speak of and I had the receptionist working there ring through to the head office to get a

quote for the tests and I paid up front. Some time later I received a surprise extra bill off that company for a further amount taking the total over \$350. I had to go and complain to have the extra charge reversed. I wonder if a less financially literate individual would have just accepted their fee increase and paid it. Then I heard that same company I was responsible for taking out the wrong side of that patient's bowels. I wasn't surprised that such a stuff up could happen after my own experience. How can all these separate companies communicate and work with each other in harmony like within a normal public hospital where everyone is on the same staff role? I don't think they could.

How could anyone imagine that a mixed system of public / private and all these other attached private company providers within the NBH could be better than one seamless unit in a first class all public hospital like we had at MVH? It seems obvious to me that the public system could provide a far higher level of integrative care for our community.

I believe that the building of and running of the new NBH involves big deals worth big money for a lot of wealthy private companies and individuals, many foreigners and I know that they are political donors to the NSW Liberal Party. The closing of MVH was a business decision based on big money and political persuasion through relationships and donations. It made no sense for the care of our community. Our community has lost out big time on this dud deal and for a few hundred thousand dollars of political donations our health care has been sold off to the private sector. I will say again that people are going to die and after this goes on for a while the experiment of privatising our health care and closing our local public MVH will be seen as an abject failure and a shame on all the politicians and private companies that put this greedy and deluded deal together.

Thankyou for receiving my submission,