

**Submission
No 231**

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

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ALLAN W FORREST

EAR NOSE AND THROAT SPECIALIST

16th August 2019

N.S.W Parliamentary

Committee of Inquiry regarding...

Northern Beaches Hospital

Dear Ms Faehrmann

My name is Allan Forrest. I am a highly regarded Senior ENT Surgeon in private practice in Dee Why. I would like to give a submission to the Committee about my experiences with the Management of the Northern Beaches Hospital over the past two years.

I still practice on the Northern Beaches in Dee Why and 3 days a month in Tamworth.

As a Visiting medical officer in ENT to Mona Vale and Manly Hospital since 2010, I had always believed that moving to the new Northern Beaches Hospital would be an automatic move, once Manly and Mona Vale Hospitals closed. All communication with the AMA, NSW Health and hospital colleagues confirmed this belief.

In July 2017, I attended an interview with Ms Deborah Latta and a junior ENT colleague, regarding accreditation at the Northern Beaches Hospital. Ms Latta, asked me if I had any questions of Healthscope, and I replied that it was my hope they would honour my public waiting list. It was 12 months long at that stage. Ms Latta replied that they would have to think about that request.

I said, "Hang on, we are talking about a new Public hospital aren't we, like Manly and Mona Vale."

She replied "No, it's a different funding model".

Over the past 6 years I have also provided the only ENT visiting service to Tamworth and I had been bringing public and private country patients who require surgery to Sydney. My ENT colleague pointed out to Ms Latta about my care of country patients, and again Ms Latta said they would have to think about that. It was clear to me that what she was really saying, was that Healthscope did not want to look after these country patients and those already on my public waiting list.

The interview felt very uncomfortable and I documented all that was said during the interview.

In November 2017, the results of the interview were revealed, and I was sent a short note from Healthscope stating that my accreditation application had been unsuccessful.

Having devoted a large part of my ENT career to caring for public patients, 10 years in Tamworth, then 8 years in Ryde and Royal North Shore hospitals, then another 8 years in Manly and Mona Vale Hospitals,

this was a devastating shock. This was 26 years as a specialist working with public patients. I had no intention of retiring from Public practice for some years yet.

I then tried to enlist the help of The Minister for Health Mr Brad Hazzard, whose electoral office is located close to my practice. I submitted copies of Healthscope's By-Laws and NSW Health's By-Laws for his information as they contain a number of extreme differences, especially in the treatment of Visiting Medical Officers in case of dispute.

I also approached the AMA for help, but it seemed that nobody could make any headway on my behalf with Ms Latta. Despite 2 emails to her requesting explanation of my failed application, I received no reply.

Finding I could no longer help public patients from Dee Why or Tamworth, I worked hard at Mona Vale Hospital to reduce the waiting list that was already there, completing it just as the hospital closed in October 2018.

When the management of the Northern Beaches Hospital changed soon after it opened in October 2018, I thought there may be an opportunity to reapply to Healthscope. Dr Simon Woods, the new DMS wrote back to me and invited me to come to see him in February this year. He explained that my accreditation had not been rejected because of any professional shortcomings, but that the hospital didn't need my services. He said they had enough ENT Surgeons on the staff at 5. (They have subsequently appointed at least 2 more, an inconsistency with what he was saying.) The very first thing he mentioned to me as I entered his office was, "The first thing I want you to understand clearly is that this is a private hospital". I was very calm and made no comment, as I had with Ms Latta, because I was hoping for a reversal of my rejection.

The next person I spoke with about this non accreditation issue was Dr Alex Saxby, the new Head of the ENT Surgery Department at Northern Beaches Hospital. He was very supportive and spoke to Dr Woods on my behalf.

Dr Woods called me back to see him. He told me that Dr Saxby had supported my application but that he was concerned. He said that the main reason for my rejection was because of the country patients I had been looking after in Sydney. This was inconsistent with his previous discussion with me.

In the past, in both my public and private work, I have had excellent working relationships with anaesthetists, theatre nursing staff and ward nursing staff at my other hospitals. I enjoy teaching the registrars and had been very involved in teaching and contributing to the training of our ENT Registrar at Mona Vale Hospital.

In summary,

- My appointment to the Northern Beaches Hospital should have been a smooth and transparent process, as I had been a visiting medical officer in ENT to Mona Vale and Manly Hospitals prior to their closing.
- Northern Beaches Administration have made it clear that my non accreditation there was because they did not want the responsibility of care for my country public patients.
- The requirement that public patients must come from within Northern Beaches postcodes, is also an indicator that Healthscope are trying to limit admissions of public patients.

- Two of Healthscope's most senior officials (Ms Latta and Dr Woods) have confirmed to me directly that they are first and foremost a Private Hospital.
- This information was not made clear to anyone (especially the Northern Beaches public) prior to the hospital opening.
- I am disappointed that I cannot look after public patients on the Northern Beaches at this point in time.

Yours Sincerely

Allan Forrest