

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PROVISION OF
HEALTH SERVICES IN THE SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY
GROWTH REGION**

Name: Dr Mike Freeland MP

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Dr Mike Freeland MP

Federal Member for Macarthur



**Inquiry into the current and future provision of health services in the
South-West Sydney Growth Region
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000**

18th February 2020

To whom it may concern,

I have practiced as a paediatrician in the Macarthur region for almost 4 decades, and now have the distinct honour of representing this region in the Australian Parliament as the Member for Macarthur.

My many years caring for children and families in the Macarthur region, and now through serving them in the Federal Parliament, have provided me with a unique insight into the many challenges faced by our community in terms of access to healthcare.

I myself worked at Campbelltown Hospital for many years, before becoming Head of the Paediatrics Department, and continue to do a no-cost clinic to this date.

Our community, and that of South West Sydney, is in dire need of improvements in the health sector.

There is no disputing the fact that access to care and affordability of care decreases the further someone resides from a metropolitan hub. This is unacceptable, and successive Governments must commit to addressing this disparity that exists for lower socio-economic areas, and our rural, remote and regional communities.

The public healthcare system needs to work in greater harmony with other social services; not least of which is the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The fact that my community is experiencing massive delays in Developmental Assessments, which are often crucial to obtaining a diagnosis and providing a child with the necessary supports, is abhorrent.

My colleagues in the medical profession will attest to the fact that these assessments are taking over a year to conduct, in some cases over 600 days, within my community. Shockingly, these assessments take mere weeks to be conducted in more affluent areas.



Other areas also need to be actively considered, and policies need to be enacted to address the growing issues that exist in South West Sydney and across our public health system.

Our local Emergency Department, for example, is under increasing pressure. The NSW Government's decision to close the co-located After-hours GP Clinic at Campbelltown Hospital undoubtedly put strain on our already over-burdened ED. The freezing of Medicare rebates means that many people cannot afford to see a GP, and this leads to increasing pressures on emergency departments.

The Macarthur region is also experiencing a shortage in terms of midwifery services and staffing. Campbelltown Hospital's own Department has a shortage of approximately 45 FTE positions.

I am also concerned that we are witnessing a complete collapse in outpatient services provided through the public health system.

I fear that the state of our health care system will only worsen in coming years, with the pressures on our public hospitals ever increasing with the rapid population growth projected for South West Sydney.

I believe that we need to invest heavily in our public health care system to ensure that we can adequately service our region's present and future demand.

We are at risk of adopting an approach to healthcare that is similar to that of the United States, whereby only the wealthy can afford quality care. Our healthcare system's universality is at risk.

A two-tiered healthcare system must be rejected at all costs; we must heavily invest in public health and healthcare infrastructure to ensure that a person's wealth does not impact upon the level of care they can obtain. Dental care is an extreme example of this.

I would be more than willing to provide this Inquiry with further evidence, should it be willing to hear of my experiences and my views on the state of our public health system.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Mike Freeland MP, M.B.B.S. F.R.A.C.P.
Member for Macarthur