

**Submission
No 51**

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

Organisation: Fairfield City Council

Date Received: 29 May 2020

In reply please quote: 12/00261

Contact: Susan Gibbeson on 9725 0700

29 May 2020

The Director, Portfolio Committee 2,
Parliament House, Macquarie Street,
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

Inquiry into the current and future provision of health services in the South-West Sydney Growth Region by the NSW Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee 2

Fairfield City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Legislative Council Inquiry into the current and future provision of health services in the South-West Sydney growth region.

Context

Fairfield Local Government Area (LGA) is located in the South West Sydney Local Health District. Despite not being classified as a current 'growth area', the 2019 NSW population projections for Fairfield LGA show an increase of 49,100 people is expected to occur between 2016 and 2036. These projections also show a projected population for Fairfield in 2021 as 211,050, however, the current ABS estimated residential population for Fairfield in 2019 is 211,695.

In addition to the existing population projections, there are a number of additional investigations and proposals that may result in a larger population than is currently forecast. This includes the Fairfield Rural Land Urban Investigation Area and possible rail links between Parramatta and Western Sydney Airport.

Fairfield LGA in 2016 had a SEIFA ranking of 856, making it the most disadvantaged community in the Sydney region and the 4th most disadvantaged LGA in NSW. It is well established that disadvantaged communities also have poor health outcomes and this is evident in Fairfield LGA.

Fairfield LGA is the place where most humanitarian entrants to NSW settle. Between 1 January 2016 and 30 June 2019 Fairfield LGA saw 9,149 humanitarian entrants arriving directly from overseas and 9,965 moving into Fairfield LGA after initially being settled in other areas. A small number (1,923) of humanitarian entrants, who initially settled in Fairfield LGA, reported a second or subsequent address not in the Fairfield LGA. This data suggests that 17,000 humanitarian entrants settled in Fairfield LGA during this three and a half year period.

The provision of health services in the South West Sydney Growth Region is of relevance to Fairfield City Council due to the proximity of Fairfield LGA to the SWS Growth Region, the existing unmet needs in health resulting from the rapid and significant growth of Fairfield in the recent decades, the projected population increase in Fairfield to 2036 and the existing poor health outcomes of the Fairfield community.

Current Health Facilities and Services

Built 32 years ago with no significant upgrades, Fairfield Hospital struggles to meet the needs of the local community as a district hospital. The hospital struggles with essential utilities including electrical supply and internet connectivity. While these are not directly health issues, they are reflective of the age and state of the hospital's infrastructure and need for a significant upgrade of the hospital to enable more effective and efficient health care.

The range of services offered by Fairfield Hospital needs to be reviewed in the context of the significant levels of population growth projected for Fairfield as well as the Growth Region. An upgraded and expanded Fairfield hospital would assist the region and increase the capacity of Liverpool hospital to better address the needs of the Growth Region while bringing service levels at Fairfield to a level required by the local community.

Access to health services

An upgraded Fairfield Hospital would increase the accessibility of a range of health services to the community and increase the capacity of Liverpool hospital.

Many Fairfield residents have low levels of health literacy and experience difficulty in navigating a complex health system. There is also a high reliance on health care cards and a low level of private health insurance holders. As a result, many Fairfield residents do not access health services in a timely manner and are dependent on the public health system. Referral to large and unfamiliar hospitals for treatment and services often places an additional barrier to the acquisition of appropriate health care. Fairfield LGA requires a unique health provision that addresses the systemic barriers faced by the community that result in poor health outcomes.

The need for nuanced and culturally appropriate service delivery in Fairfield has been clearly identified in the current pandemic. Issues such as stigma resulting from cultural beliefs, often creates additional barriers for people to access services. There is an exceptionally high level of residents in Fairfield who are born outside of Australia, have poor English language proficiency and have entered Australia as refugees or with refugee-like backgrounds. To address health issues faced by the Fairfield community, localised responses are required. Enhancing Fairfield Hospital as a specialised place-based hospital that can respond to the unique health needs of the most disadvantaged and multicultural community in NSW would be an innovative solution to an entrenched community issue.

The Fairfield Health Partnership was established in recognition of the unique health challenges of the Fairfield community. This Partnership is evidence of the need for a

place-based focus to address the specific and unique challenges in the Fairfield LGA. The Fairfield Health Partnership, a formal partnership with the South West Sydney Local Health District through the Population Health Division. The effectiveness of the place-based approach has recently been acknowledged with the establishment of the Fairfield Health Alliance which brings together the SWS Primary Health Network and the Primary and Community Health Division of the SWS Local Health District.

NSW Government has the opportunity to provide an innovative solution to the need for increased clinical capacity and effective service provision by ensuring that Fairfield Hospital has the capacity to operate as a specialist place-based hospital which will ensure improved health outcomes for the Fairfield community and South West Sydney Growth Region.

Yours sincerely

SUSAN GIBBESON
MANAGER SOCIAL PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
