

Submission
No 13

**INQUIRY INTO HEALTH OUTCOMES AND ACCESS TO
HEALTH AND HOSPITAL SERVICES IN RURAL,
REGIONAL AND REMOTE NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 1 October 2020

Partially
Confidential

I lived on a property 63km from town (Griffith). My son at the time was 18m of age. He had been sick all week, newly diagnosed with "baby asthma". My husband and I had attended asthma classes and were taught how to manage my sons asthma. One night my son started coughing with a croup cough. I knew it was croup, as my eldest son had also suffered from bouts of croup. It is a very distinctive cough. I packed my bag to drive to hospital at 11pm at night to take my 18m old son to the hospital not expecting to return home (assuming an admission of croup). We arrived at hospital around midnight. It was foggy, the 63km drive had kangaroos and my son was distressed. We arrived at hospital only to be told my son had an upper respiratory virus and to go home.

I knew my son was very sick, I knew I should have stood up for him but felt bullied for being an overbearing mother. I drove the 63km home in fog with kangaroos on the road. I was worried, upset and unheard. For the first time since I had my son I put him in bed with me n my chest. I was so scared. His breathing was laboured. At 3am his breathing stopped. His croup had caused his windpipe to collapse. I ran to the phone, rang the hospital who promptly told me to call an ambulance. We arrange to meet the ambulance along the road. 30 km later we met the ambulance. My sons oxygen saturation was at 84%.

When we arrived in the ambulance bay the doctor that had seen us earlier that evening met us in the bay. She immediately took over. Our son nearly died that night. A wrong diagnosis. A total neglect of a mothers concern. A total neglect on the distance required to travel for health care nearly cost my 18month old son his life. My son ended up with permanent respiratory problems which still affects him to this day (he is now 27yrs old). Rural health needs a different lens. Rural people have different geographical challenges to meet in seeking help. Medical professionals become stale (the doctor in this story was a senior emergency director) and do not keep up with current practice. Parents are treated as overly anxious idiots.

My son went on to have multiple admissions with asthma. Each time I had to advocate for his admission only to be vindicated the following morning by the volume of oxygen administered to keep his oxygen levels up. One doctor in ED informed me that I had the problem not my son. I stood my ground. My son was admitted. The staff in kids ward told me the following morning that I did the right thing as my son was administered a large amount of oxygen despite the hourly ventolin and steroids administered.

I used to wish I could bypass ED and go straight to kids ward. The problem was due to junior doctors in ED working beyond their competence and a reluctance to ring senior experienced doctors who were exhausted after a day of GP work.

Our rural system is broken. It is as bad today as what it was 25 years ago!!!