

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 7 October 2020

Partially
Confidential

I live on a property that is based in the south western area of the Liverpool Plains. It roughly takes an hour and a half to reach Tamworth (my closest city with full facilities). A couple of weeks ago my 12 week old daughter became very sick at home. We decided to drive her to Tamworth emergency as Quirindi and Gunnedah (the two closer small towns to us) don't have a paediatrician. Tamworth hospital also has a brand new children's ward and emergency department so we thought it was safest to take her there. We arrived at Tamworth Emergency at 2 in the afternoon and we didn't see a paediatrician till 11.30pm and then we weren't admitted to the children's ward till 1.30am. This is just the start of the dismal service we received.

My daughter was constantly being monitored the whole time we were in emergency because she had a high heart rate, she was also becoming dehydrated because of the symptoms from her illness. The doctors that were working the ward were on the phone to the paediatricians and were concerned that they would need to give her a feeding tube. We were told at 5pm that we would need to stay the night on the children's ward but we were not allowed to go up there until a paediatrician admitted us. My point is how are the doctors allowed to treat my baby and give her a feeding tube but they are not allowed to admit us to the children's ward.

Once we finally got to the ward the nurses were really rude and made me feel like I was an overreacting first time mum and she didn't need to be in hospital as the paediatrician decided that my daughter just had eczema as she had an angry rash all over her (even though eczema didn't explain her high heart rate, loss of appetite, diarrhoea).

I was obviously not able to leave my daughter unattended as she was so young and also being breast fed, the hospital refused to feed me as I was classed as a visitor, so as a breastfeeding mother I didn't eat for 12 hours. The next day the only person to come see us first thing in the morning was the lady who asked for my private health details so they could bill them. Otherwise I didn't see a nurse for hours. We were discharged the next day with a diagnosis of eczema.

Fast forward to the Friday (5 days after we were in the emergency ward) I get a phone call from Tamworth Hospital telling me that my daughter's skin swab had come back positive for a staph infection and she needed antibiotics ASAP. I was absolutely disgusted that it took them 5 days to contact me, to make it worse they tried to call me the day before but didn't leave a message saying they had urgent results. On top of this the person who called me on the Friday saying she needed antibiotics waited till 3.15pm before the long weekend. He also wouldn't write me a script and said I needed to go to my GP. When I tried to explain how far I lived from Tamworth he seemed to find that strange and didn't understand that Tamworth was a closest hub. So I had to drive up to Tamworth on the Saturday morning and pay for an out of hours GP appointment to get her antibiotics.

Quite frankly the whole thing was a shambles and I will never step foot in Tamworth hospital again. I will just drive the extra 150km and go to Newcastle. I do not understand why the money has been spent to put in a brand new children's ward, maternity unit etc. at Tamworth hospital when there are absolutely no qualified specialists working in there. The government have to make people work in regional Australia. But sadly most the people

making these decisions have absolutely no idea what it is like to live remotely, so I can't imagine anything is going to improve.

The majority of people I know who live in remote Australia travel to Sydney or Newcastle to receive medical treatment because the regional hubs can't provide the service quality and when it comes to your health or children's health no one wants to settle for average care.

On a positive note the nurses working on emergency were absolutely brilliant and they were so helpful and like always they are the ones that are usually overworked and under paid.

The obvious issue is the lack of specialists working in remote NSW and the government have to address the fact that these specialists are all living in the larger city hubs and they need to be encouraged to move to regional areas. Especially when regional cities like Tamworth are seeing growth and have government plans to grow it even more. The health care system has to be able to service the population and currently it's struggling to do that.

I would like to make the point to finish off that staph infections can kill children as young as 10 weeks (the age of my daughter when we went into emergency).