

Submission
No 73

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 27 November 2020

Partially
Confidential

RE: Inquiry into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales.

Dear Committee Members,

My name is _____ and I am a resident of Broken Hill NSW. In 2018 I began having heart issues and was diagnosed with Atrial Fibrillation (AF). I was being monitored and treated by Broken Hill Hospital's Cardiology Specialist Clinic.

In late March 2020 I was referred by Cardiovascular Imaging Specialist, _____ to Royal Adelaide Hospital in South Australia for a Transesophageal Echocardiogram. Broken Hill Hospital (Far West Local Health District) is limited to what surgical procedures can be conducted locally so I had to drive myself to Adelaide which is 500km from Broken Hill. Results from my scan saw my condition had deteriorated and I was referred to Calvary Adelaide Hospital for urgent heart surgery.

I attended Calvary Adelaide Hospital Wednesday 1st April 2020 for mitral valve and bypass surgery as a public patient. The surgery was performed by Cardiac and Thoracic Surgeon _____. On admission I was told I would spend 7 to 10 days in hospital and would then require rehabilitation for a further 7 days after my release.

I was discharged on Wednesday 8th April 2020 with no family or carer present. I was taken to the Pharmacy Department by a ward nurse to pick up \$200 worth of medication then wheeled out the front of the hospital and put into a Taxi to go to my daughter's house. I thought on my discharge that I would be taken to a rehabilitation facility for further recovery. I was not given any information regarding follow-up appointments, wound care directions and rehabilitation. I had a very painful pressure sore on my back that was not treated or mentioned on my discharge notes. I felt as if I was a box to be ticked and forgotten about.

Feeling anxious and upset over the non-existent follow-up treatment post-surgery, I drove myself home to Broken Hill NSW Saturday 11th April. I then began to feel unwell and was having intermittent loss of vision and my face felt strange.

Monday 13th April, I was taken to Broken Hill Hospital by ambulance and later found out that I had been suffering from small strokes over the weekend and had a larger embolic stroke that morning. I discharged myself on Thursday 16th April 2020.

Again, on discharge I was not offered any rehabilitation for my heart surgery or stroke which I believe is due to the fact that the Broken Hill Rehabilitation Facility has been repurposed into a COVID-19 Clinic.

I am on long term Work Cover due to a workplace incident and have limited funds. I've had to fund my own physio treatment for the first few weeks after being released from hospital which is very expensive. I can no longer continue with physio as I do not have the financial means to do so.

I've only had 1 follow up appointment from Broken Hill Hospital and the heart specialist since my surgery in April and that was only conducted over the phone. I am due to have an appointment with the cardiac Specialist via tele-link Monday 30th November.

I feel if I had received proper follow-up care and rehabilitation after my surgery the small strokes I was having would have been picked up. I now have ongoing stroke after effects such as weakness in my left arm, cognitive and communication issues. Rehabilitation is an important aspect of any form of recovery and for a city the size of Broken Hill, to not have this service available during Covid puts many at risk of further complications.

I feel the lack of communication and patient follow-up care between NSW and SA hospitals has also contributed to my condition.