

**Submission
No 97**

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

Organisation: Rotary Club of Warren

Date Received: 30 November 2020

Health and Hospital Services in Warren 2824

Warren Shire is in critical need of a ten-bed dementia specific unit so that people do not have to leave town to get adequate care.

Warren Shire has a population of approximately 2 800 people. Of that number, approximately 1 800 reside in the township of Warren. As with most rural towns we have an increasingly ageing population.

The health needs of the Shire are serviced by:

- The Multi-Purpose Service (MPS), which includes long stay beds, emergency services and other ancillary services.
- Calara House, which is a twenty-bed hostel. Calara House was built twenty-six years ago as a low to medium care hostel. Calara House stands for Care And Love Are Remembered Always. The essence of Calara House is to provide a home-like environment for elderly residents. These facilities were provided by the Warren community, who raised \$760,000 and the Federal Government, who provided matching funding. Calara House is now incorporated into the MPS.
- The Warren Community Homes are fourteen rent-subsidised, self-care units for the elderly. This facility was initiated thirty-five years ago and was and is funded by locally raised money plus a one-off \$90 000 Federal Government grant. It is run by a voluntary committee and receives no government funding.
- Warren has an Ambulance service, Meals on Wheels, Home Care and Community Transport.

As recently as two years ago, the Rotary Club of Warren, with the support of Warren Shire Council and the Honourable Mark Coulton MP saw the need for a ten bed dementia-specific unit at the MPS.

Calara House was designed to provide only low to medium levels of care. No alterations have been made to Calara House and it is not able to accommodate these dementia specific needs. Extremely high levels of pressure exist on the resources of Calara house.

New residents are faced with these high-care dementia residents. This is confronting and frightening for residents with no dementia. This has made the problem of maintaining a home-like environment, the original intent of Calara House, very difficult.

Because adequate dementia care facilities are not available in Warren, when a resident becomes too agitated or aggressive or begins to wander and need secure dementia specific care they must be sent to Dubbo, Nyngan or other available facilities. These facilities are all long distances from Warren, which obviously raises a plethora of issues. Importantly, these implications are not limited to the patient but their spouse, family, friends, support network and others around them. These issues include:

- Having an elderly and confused resident move from a familiar to an unfamiliar environment a long way from home has profound impacts on that person.
- In many cases, they are isolated from their lifelong partner, who is usually of a similar age and often has high care needs.
- They are isolated from their lifelong friends.
- Increased social isolation for the patient, their spouse and extended family.
- They often have no family living in their new location.

Possibly one of the most frustrating issues is that there are no transport options available. If an elderly person does not have a licence or a family member living locally, they have no way to visit their loved one.

Surely we can do better in their most vulnerable stage of life?