

**Submission  
No 216**

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

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Six years ago my husband and I moved to Cowra in the Central West of NSW so we could retire and own a home which we could not on the Northern Beaches of Sydney.

We chose Cowra because it had, what we thought was a large hospital and other government outlets i.e. Centrelink.

Just before moving my husband had a stroke and had to be airlifted to Orange hospital for rehab, then on to Cowra Hospital for Occupational Therapist assessment. I was horrified at the condition of the hospital and that horror was reinforced when I had to spend a couple of days after surgery.

The condition is outrageous compared to other hospitals in the Cabonne and Hilltops shires (and please note that these hospitals are fifty to a hundred kilometres away).

The wards are very noisy. There is paint peeling from the walls and patches where equipment has been removed. The bathrooms are antiquated, and the water pressure was non-existent so showering and the flushing of toilets was not satisfactory as far as infection control was concerned. There is only one TV per ward, and although not a necessary piece of equipment, it allows one to take their mind off the unpleasantness of their surroundings.

Emergency Room is very small with little room to move and when the flight doctor and ambulance gurneys are to be used, which is often as most emergencies have to be transferred to other hospitals, other equipment has to be moved around to allow access to the patients.

This is no reflection on the nursing staff who are wonderful and run off their feet with lack of staffing. Doctors come and go and are usually new from University and leave within two years, as very few want to stay in a rural town.

That brings in the other contentious topic of lack of doctors in rural towns.

Cowra is lucky to have a large and modern Medical Centre with many practitioners but don't try and get a regular doctor. Most of the long-term doctors are inundated with their long-term patients and do not take on new ones, so, to keep a doctor that understands you and your concerns is not possible for new residents and there are a lot of new residents as more and more retirees are moving to rural areas.

I have lived in Cowra for six years now and have had a new doctor each year and have to continually go through my medical history with them. Many are from overseas and their English is not perfect and neither is their empathy (bedside manner).

To sum up. I came from the area where the Health Minister, Brad Hazzard MP was my local member. In that area I had my doctor for twenty years. That area had two hospitals that were in better condition than the 70-year-old Cowra hospital and replaced with a brand new Northern Beaches Hospital because they were in need of upgrading. So why are Cowra residents made to travel over a hundred kilometres for specialist treatment and as most are elderly, a lot of them at the government's expense (no public transport in Cowra)?

We had seventy million dollars allocated to upgrade or replace the hospital and specialist facilities but are now only getting five hundred thousand dollars for a patch up job and we are supposed to be happy about that. Our Parliamentary Representative puts on a brave face but we the residents are totally disappointed and angry.

The Government wants people to move to rural areas where there is no work, not the opportunity to have a regular doctor and unsatisfactory medical care locally. There is no motivation to leave the city so why would you?