

**Submission
No 223**

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

Name: Mr Robert McCallum
Date Received: 8 December 2020

In March 2020 I visited the Dentist in Forster to have an upper molar removed, in April I revisited the Dentist to have a splinter of tooth shale removed. After removal of the shale the Dentist noticed a growth on the floor of my mouth and referred me to a Dental Specialise in Taree who took a biopsy from the growth.

A couple of days later I was advised that the biopsy proved cancer, I now started to fear the worse, at 72 years old I had Cancer! and with a 60 year old wife I began to feel anxiety and depression started to set in.

The results of the biopsy were referred to the Maxillofacial Team at the John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle and over the next six weeks I was travelling between Forster, Taree (40 minutes travelling each way) and Newcastle (over 2 hours travelling each way). I had a CTC Scan, a MIR Scan, Blood tests, a Bone Scan with all results forwarded to Maxillofacial Team. Then in June I had a PET Scan at the Calvary Mater Hospital in Newcastle then the following day back to the John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle for an interview with one of the Surgical Teams on what was to follow.

I was advised that I had a Maxillofacial Carcinoma Cancer which is an uncommon form of Oral Cancer which would require the Cancer being removed from my mouth and the removal of a number of nymph glands from my neck, I was also advised about the side effects of the radiation treatment which among other things would cause weight loss, my sense of taste and appetite, neck skin discolouration and nauseous.

The operation would require two Surgical Teams, one to remove the Cancer and the other team for the reconstruction involving skin grafts from my arm and wrist followed by 6 weeks of Radiation treatment at the Calvary Mater Hospital in Newcastle (over 2 hours travelling each way).

I was book in to the John Hunter Hospital on the 10 July for Surgery which lasted 8 hours. I was advised the surgery removed the cancer and a total of 42 nymph glads from my neck, I spent 21 days in intensive care facing the fact that my life had changed forever. I had drain tubes in my arm where grafts were taken, in my neck to drain fluids, a feeding tube through my nose and a Tracheotomy tube inserted in my neck.

Owing to the distance my wife had to travel to visit me in hospital and look after our animals she could only visit me every second or third day. Our local member is trying to have a public hospital build in Forster as the population in Forster is made up of mainly aged retirees who are too frail to travel over 200 kilometres for specialist medical treatment.