

Submission
No 231

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

Name: Mrs Carol Richard
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Partially
Confidential

Until July 2020, Coolah was served by two medical practices. RARMS was contracted by WNSWLHD to conduct one of these practices within the newly refurbished MPS rooms. The established Dr had been in Coolah for some years but his wife had moved to Sydney and he was more or less one week on, one week off in order to visit his wife. This necessitated a lot of locum expenses and anecdotally, RARMS lost \$200,000 over this arrangement and this was the reason for suddenly pulling out of Coolah. Though RARMS is listed as a Charity, it was definitely a "commercial" operation and again, anecdotally, they were intending to list as a company and wanted to adjust the books to look better.

In last few weeks, WNSWHD has cancelled RARMS contracts in favour of a new supplier to (mainly Indigenous) towns. RARMS sends out a lot of conflicting statements about their commitment to rural and remote communities- especially when you look at the withdrawal from Coolah so abruptly.

Coolah MPS was substantially enlarged and opened in 2019 with a new Aged Care wing replacing the Community initiated Aged Care Hostel that the Community had to hand over to then GWAHS for \$1.

This beautiful building now lies empty (and deteriorating) while the Community asks for its return from WNSWHD. There has been no response to Community for a resolution in over a year.

At a meeting with Dr (Rural Director Medical Services) and (General Manager) on 27 October with Coolah District Development Group members, they proposed that our Private Practice Dr, should take on a partner and move to the MPS premises. This Dr herself is newly established in practice, is unable to meet the demands of a Practice Partner in monetary terms and is remaining in her rooms in Binnia St Coolah.

This FOB OFF is unconscionable from our Health leaders.
(Incidentally their advertisement for a Dr in Coolah was a cut and paste ad. that left Narromine in the text- we were told they had no response.)

Wait time for an appointment is 3 weeks for an appointment in Coolah.

The Community is happy with the standard of care within the MPS but it is a great concern that the Staff are seriously overworked-they have a personal commitment to the patients and they go beyond what is normally expected of their role and this causes a high burn out rate. No remuneration is worth the high physical demands expected of them- demanded of them. Just yesterday I spoke to an aid about providing extras for their Christmas dinner personally but has put in her resignation for early in 2021 due to overload.

Telehealth is dangerous - noone wants to see a repeat of the tragedy in Gulgong. Most older people are uncomfortable with Telehealth and consider it an invasion of privacy and are unwilling to discuss what the real problem may be-particularly if it is really about mental health. Covid this year is on top of bushfire, drought within 3 years.

The new Aged Care unit and upgrades to accommodate the GP service at Coolah MPS was almost \$20million. Initial planning of the project was ill thought out and was rejigged. In order to incorporate existing hospital infrastructure in the additional Aged Care section, considerable extra costs were incurred. Unfortunately, this Aged Care section is now just another "hospital" institution and is not something people want to enter for care-unlike the former community Aged Hostel that offered care but not confinement. Covid isolation has been very hard on inmates and their families and everyone has noticed considerable decline in the Oldies. The Staff have done their best but it has been hard to see staff go in and out (many of these are contract staff)- and Dr going to Sydney weekly- and families banned from visiting in what has been the last few months of some loved ones recently passed away.

We have had no Covid, and we are grateful for the efforts to protect people but there seem to be anomalies that were hard to take.

We need two doctors in Coolah as we serve several other communities nearby. The neighbouring towns of Dunedoo, Gulgong and even Mudgee are underserved and it is hard to get onto anyone's books. Three or more weeks wait for an appointment is not acceptable.