

Submission
No 282

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 7 December 2020

Partially
Confidential

Our daughter experienced a major incidence of depression while at university in Armidale. We had to bring her home to the farm to care for her. It took several years to get a diagnosis, although all of the doctors and specialists did their best. To put it in perspective, we live 25 minutes from the closest town, Gulgong, which had one GP. When that GP moved to Dubbo, to maintain continuity we drove to Dubbo regularly (1 hour). We managed to get her a psychologist in Mudgee (50 mins), but had to keep adjusting to the high turnover of trained professionals. In the end she refused to go to the Mudgee psychologists after the 3rd one left: she got sick of starting all over again.

We were referred to a psychiatrist and the only one was a FIFO doctor who only came once/month. He was quite elderly, and would not listen to what we said, having already diagnosed from notes sent. We did not continue with this.

She suffered a seizure and was referred to a Neurologist in Orange (2+ hours). She had to wait several months before attending epilepsy studies at Westmead. Eventually we were referred to the Brain and Mind Institute in Sydney (5-6 hours). She attended several health professionals (psychologists and neuropsychologists) each fortnight for a while and then monthly.

During all of this I was working fulltime as a teacher, while my husband managed the farm. Fortunately we run beef cattle, which isn't as labour intensive as other farming.

I know that we live in a rural community, but we had to travel great distances because nothing was local. It was quite difficult to find a specialist, although once they knew what we were doing most bulk billed. We could not access any assistance (the farm being an asset) although at one point our daughter did have a health care card.

I know that things have improved a little, but it is still hard to retain health professionals for any length of time that would enable continuity of treatment.

My daughter now lives in Canberra, and has no trouble accessing programs and professionals to treat her epilepsy and depression.