

**Submission  
No 400**

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

**Organisation:** Yass Valley Council

**Date Received:** 13 January 2021

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I refer to your email regarding the Parliamentary Inquiry into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote areas.

Yass Valley has a population of 17,000 and is forecasted to grow to over 27,000 by 2036. The main settlements are the towns of Yass and Murumbateman and the villages of Bookham, Bowning, Binalong, Gundaroo, Sutton and Wee Jasper. New growth is being directed into the towns of Yass and Murrumbateman to build on the existing infrastructure in these localities. Council's long term strategic plan to accommodate this growth is included in the Yass Valley Settlement Strategy.

Council has been advocating for improved medical services for several years. For example there are limited maternity services in Yass and residents have to travel to Queanbeyan, Goulburn or Canberra. Similarly residents needing dialysis and oncology services must travel into the ACT. Many residents in Yass Valley rely on Community Transport to travel for these services. This has been particularly challenging during the COVID-19 restrictions as many of the community transport drivers are volunteers many of whom are vulnerable to the virus.

Long term planning for facilities and services is essential. Based on the projected population growth for Yass Valley it is unlikely the current hospital site in Yass will be adequate for future needs. The current site is now constrained by surrounding development and there are limited options for expansion. Health authorities need to start long term planning now to ensure adequate site(s) are secured for future facilities. Perhaps the State Government could adopt a similar approach to the Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework undertaken by Local Government. A 20 year plan, term of government plan and an annual plan should be the foundation for a health infrastructure and services plan.

The recent upgrades to ambulance services and the emergency department at the Yass Hospital and the recent announcement of a trial for additional hours for the Yass Midwifery Outreach Service are all welcome. Unfortunately the future priorities are not clear to Council or the wider community. There needs to be a clear long term plan as outlined above.

Rowena Abbey  
Mayor Yass Valley Council