

Supplementary
Submission
No 231a

**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

This is my second submission as circumstances have drastically changed for the worse since the first one in December for the early deadline.

After the withdrawal of RARMS from Coolah in July because “they were making a loss “, our remaining Dr was overwhelmed and had to close her books to new patients. Waiting periods for appointments were up to 3 weeks. She took Christmas period off – set to return on 4 January.

However on 3 Jan 2021 there was a notice on Facebook to say that she was leaving Coolah, providing some Telehealth services for 2 months or so-everything dependent on a replacement service.

In October 2020, a meeting was held with Dr (Rural Director Medical Services) and (General Manager) Western Area Health with community group. Their solution was for Dr to move her surgery to the MPS facility and take on a partner. This was never going to happen as Dr is herself a newly qualified GP and the reason she came to Coolah was for family reasons. Tragically for Coolah, Dr has left Coolah, possibly partly from being a new GP left with sole responsibility for a population of over 1,500 in a remote location, when the nearest town, Dunedoo is also not serviced adequately- meaning she was the only GP for over 2,500 people to be reached within an hour’s travelling time- or to a major hospital at Dubbo or Mudgee. Also on a major highway- the Golden highway from Newcastle to Dubbo.

On another stream, after the tragic death of a critically ill patient at Gulgong when there was no Dr at hospital, rules have been changed that paramedics called to such an emergency, knowing that there is no Dr at nearest hospital, can go immediately to another hospital where a Dr is present. Pity it takes a loss of life to make such a logical change to patient care.

In December, the Coolah Ambos were called to a case near Dunedoo. A Dr on Telehealth made the call for the patient to be conveyed to Dubbo Hospital that night. This left Coolah uncovered by ambulance service for up to 4 hours – then blowing out to 11am next morning due to compulsory shift relief orders. The paramedics did not consider that the case was urgent- it could have been left to Patient Transport the next day.

The Ambulance service was overruled by a distant telehealth doctor who probably had no knowledge of transport distances nor repercussions of calling out an ambulance from a town for an extended period. Thankfully, there was no other emergency that night.

However, it caused distress to the Ambos who live in town and also know the precarious nature of the Dr situation – now in 2021, far more dangerous and precarious.



The Community Noticeboard - Coolah & Surrounds

Notice to Patients of Coolah GP,

Myself and my family have decided to move on from Coolah and I will be working to open a clinic nearer to family down the coast. The Coolah clinic will close from Monday the 4th of January 2021. I have liased with the Area Health Service and a group that operates medical clinics in rural towns and I am hopeful a new service will commence.

In the interim I will try to help by continuing to offer telehealth consults- via phone or video conferencing to any current patient's who choose to take this option.

For patients that had appointments through January and early February 2021 I will personally call on the day and time of your appointment- please note that this number will come up as a private number. I will be able to provide most necessary services- scripts, referrals, basic assessments, advice and arrangement of investigations.

For skin checks and excisions - patient's will be sent a letter of alternative services.

As soon as possible a website with an online booking and payment system will commence so I can continue to support the community until another service is in place.

The phone line will remain open for messages until at least March 31st 2021 to allow people to arrange for record transfer. The email will remain open until the end of 2021 to allow people to access their medical records.

A Health Summary can be emailed to yourself or a doctor of your choosing within 3 business days of receiving the request via phone message, email, or fax.

A full copy of your medical record can be accessed for \$75.00. The record can be placed on a USB drive in the Best Practice Medical Record Format and mailed to the address of your choosing via Registered Mail upon receipt of payment.