

**Submission
No 451**

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

Organisation: Tenterfield Shire Council

Date Received: 15 January 2021



Birthplace of Our Nation

14 January 2021

Our Ref: OUT21/59413E79

Parliament of New South Wales
C/- Sharon Ohnesorge
Director Committees
Portfolio Committee 2
Parliament of New South Wales

By Email: portfoliocommittee2@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Ohnesorge,

Re: Inquiry into Health Outcomes and Access to Health and Hospital Services in Rural, Regional and Remote New South Wales

On behalf of Tenterfield Shire Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to the Inquiry into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales.

Council's submission addresses the terms of reference with a focus on item (a) health outcomes for people living in rural, regional and remote NSW.

Tenterfield Shire Council has actively been involved in advocacy on this issue for many years, with our community concerns on the deterioration of patient care and outcomes, evidenced by a number of incidents and personal accounts of patients over the past years.

Community advocacy for Tenterfield was evident on the 13th of November 2019, with Tenterfield hosting a Tenterfield Hospital Community meeting with more than 200 people in attendance. The public meeting called for the staffing issues at the local hospital to be resolved. The meeting at the Memorial Hall was held in response to a recent death at the hospital, when no doctor was rostered on. Other items on the agenda included calls for a guaranteed 24/7 doctor at the Tenterfield Hospital, higher nurse staffing levels and improvements in both location and processes around patient transfers.

All correspondence should be addressed to:

The Chief Executive

Tenterfield Shire Council

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The Cross Border Commissioner, representatives from NSW Ambulance, the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association and local politicians formed the meeting panel. Tenterfield Shire Council Mayor, Peter Petty and Deputy Mayor, Greg Sauer, were in attendance at the meeting and received assurances at the meeting that improved provision of services would be implemented. The public meeting was followed by a meeting with the NSW Health Minister with the Deputy Mayor representing the Council concerns with service provision. Once again assurances were given that the matters raised would be addressed, however no improvement to the services or implementation of the requests' are evident.

Tenterfield Shire Council has an aging population and has benefited from the migration of retirees, specifically to the Tenterfield Township, looking for the more seasonal climate the town offers. In more recent years this migration has been reversing due to changes in perceptions and experiences accessing health care in the region. The quality and availability of doctors at our Health Service and the appropriate staffing (3x3 Nursing roster implemented, including additional provision in case of emergency) is essential for the continued economic and social prosperity of the Shire.

Council holds the strong view that the most appropriate way to move forward is to revert back to a previous management structure for the operation of Health Services in the region being the reinstatement of two separate management entities, in lieu of the current Hunter New England Health District. Our preference is to reinstate the New England Health Services in the first instance, using the previous definition of service area and that this restructure to service oversight include the incorporation of community participation such as the model of Local Hospital Boards.

In a bid to address the current shortage of Doctors and attract them to the Regions, Council believe that a system of reduced Higher Education fees in exchange for work commitments is a positive way to encourage more local supply, notwithstanding the time that it will take for participants to take up the current gaps in service being experienced in the Regions.

Council are committed to continue to advocate for improved patient centric care across our Local Government area and the regions more broadly. To this end we are happy to participate in this inquiry, however disappointed that we have not seen any action to date other than another Inquiry, despite assurances.

Should you have any further queries in relation to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Council on 02 6736 6000.

Yours sincerely,

Kylie Smith
Acting Chief Executive