

**Submission
No 491**

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

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I am writing in connection with the Committee's inquiry into health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales.

I wish to bring to the Committee's particular attention the plight of the Blue Mountains District ANZAC Memorial Hospital in Katoomba (Katoomba Hospital)

The aforementioned facility is generally the most accessible hospital to those living in the Blue Mountains Region. As such, the hospital services an increasing population with an appreciably older demographic.

Despite these population trends, many medical specialties are currently unavailable at Katoomba Hospital. As a result, patients are required to travel to Nepean Hospital in Penrith or even further afield to Westmead Hospital in order to access these services, including outpatient visits. The attendant delays and lengthy travelling times causes considerable inconvenience to patients and their families and, as a consequence, delivers less than optimal health outcomes.

Disappointingly, Katoomba Hospital has not been included in the significant program of infrastructure upgrades that have been made to other regional hospitals in recent years. This has necessitated the local community having to fill the gap in facility and service provision via fund raising activities such as the annual Leura Garden Festival.

Notwithstanding the current substantial expansion of Nepean Hospital, for the reasons explained above, urgent action is required to ensure communities in the Blue Mountains have access to the full range of modern medical services at the local level. In our view, this can only be achieved via an adequately equipped and properly staffed, contemporary Katoomba Hospital.