

Submission
No 498

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

The Blue Mountains District ANZAC Memorial Hospital in Katoomba (Katoomba Hospital) is servicing an increasing population particularly with the relocation of many citizen from Sydney due to COVID-19. This trend is likely to continue with improved transport links, such as the new trains, and improved internet connectivity from the NBN. Notwithstanding the demographic of the catchment area is significantly older than that of Sydney and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Unfortunately, many medical specialties are unavailable at Katoomba Hospital. This means that patients must travel to Nepean Hospital in Penrith or Westmead Hospital to access these services including outpatient visits. Many older persons find it difficult—for health and/or cost reasons—or are unable to travel to these facilities so do not follow-up on their medical conditions. The impact of this is evident in the lower life expectancy of the area compared to Sydney.

The absence of critical infrastructure and staff at Katoomba Hospital means that even small accident and emergency events—such as a multiple motor vehicle accident—rapidly exceed the capacity of the hospital, which may result in significantly diminished patient outcomes due time lost in the critical hour caused by patient relocation. In the worst case, lives could be lost.

Katoomba Hospital has not had a significant upgrade in its facilities—buildings and more importantly medical infrastructure—for many years, in contrast to the recent significant infrastructure upgrades of other hospitals. As I understand it, the facilities at Katoomba Hospital have degraded to the extent that the local community has had to fill the gap that the Government has left in the facilities at and services of Katoomba Hospital through fund-raising activities, including, but not limited to, the annual Leura Garden Festival.

Even with the expansion of Nepean Hospital, urgent action is required to ensure communities in the Blue Mountains have access to the full range of modern medical services at a local level. Furthermore, Katoomba Hospital should be developed as a redundancy or overflow facility should a significant failure occur—through for example the outbreak of an infection like COVID-19—at Nepean Hospital.