

Submission
No 509

**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

I live on the mid north coast of NSW and while Taree hospital is relatively close to Harrington, due to lack of staff and specialists at that hospital, I have made a decision that if I need emergency help I will go to Port Macquarie hospital only another 10 mins from home.

I had a friend who went to Taree hospital last year with stomach pains and they sent him home. He died a couple of days later - twisted bowel.

Taree is part of Hunter Health and if you need a pacemaker you get transferred to John Hunter because no expertise available locally. This is a 2.5 hour drive by ambulance which seems potentially problematic - yet Port Macquarie is 40 mins by ambulance.

The one cardiologist that works at Taree - also has to travel to John Hunter hospital which means there is no heart specialist available for Taree and the mid north coast 24/7. We last visited him at his practice in Taree on 18 Dec and he was going on holidays. I asked what happens if someone needs him and he said "he's on call" - so where is the duty of care for his mental and physical health when he can't enjoy a quite break.

The mid north coast is a growing, ageing population and there will be increased demand for medical services. Many of the current local doctors have long waiting lists eg. kidney specialist - 3 months, dermatology - 12 months.

Recently there was an incident at Crowdy Harbour where a fisherman was brought in unconscious. Local volunteers from Marine Rescue tried to help but it was 40 minutes before an ambulance arrived and it was too late.

We have asked for an ambulance station to be built in Harrington but have been advised by our local state member (Leslie Williams) that while Harrington is a high priority - we don't make the very high priority list - so no action. How many more deaths will we have to see before action is taken.