

Submission  
No 510

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

**Name:** Name suppressed  
**Date Received:** 15 January 2021

---

Partially  
Confidential

Having lived in Narrabri for close to 20yrs, and raising my children here, have had many experiences with inadequate health services.

Birth of second child, no option for spinal block (no one qualified in town) so was asleep for his caesar birth.

Ruptured Ectopic pregnancy- not enough doctors in Narrabri to perform surgery, so sent by ambulance 170km away to Tamworth hospital where they delayed calling in the ob-gyn for 8hrs overnight as I got closer to death with internal bleeding- young, inexperienced staff on duty in Tamworth emergency didn't appreciate it was in fact a life and death situation.

2yo son with ear issues (affecting hearing and speech- still an issue 10yrs later)... to see an ENT at Dubbo or Tamworth for initial consult was a months long wait and up to 2yrs waiting list for surgery (for grommets and tonsil and adenoid removal). We were fortunate enough to be able to borrow \$10,000 to go private and have him seen to and operated on within a couple of months in Sydney (sooner than we would have had the initial consult in the bush). 2 weeks recovery time in Sydney to be near the ENT in case of complications. Numerous trips to syd for consults and sleep study. All time off work, costs for travel, accom, etc.

Another issue with his ear issues- not always a speech therapist available at the hospital. Brand new hospital and no qualified staff! Hearing testing booth, all new and fancy, but no, have to go to a mobile one at physio (and pay a fortune for the hearing test). Building a fancy new hospital is pointless if you can't get the staff the run all areas.

Toddler daughter had a wound on head that wouldn't heal- 2 surgeries at Westmead childrens hospital 9 months apart to finally heal. Numerous visits to Westmead for over a year for checks and consults. On each occasion this meant time away from work for parents and travel expenses. We are lucky enough to be able to stay with family, so accommodation expenses were a lot less for us.

3rd child had issues with pregnancy- travel fortnightly to see specialists in Moree and Tamworth- time off work each time, travel expenses. Due to high risk birth, born in Tamworth, accom and travel costs for whole family - dad missed work, siblings missed school.

Actual birth of 3rd child, newly opened Tamworth Rural referral hosp had 2 midwives on duty overnight... 3 babies born in 5 minutes, all current mums and bubs neglected - one night my 6pm painkillers (for caesar) finally arrived at 11pm! Staffing issues are a serious concern in all hospitals! The staff on duty always did their best, but they can only be in one place at a time!

Son broke an arm, one doctor on duty at Narrabri emergency, waited 8hrs to finally be seen and temporary plastered. Travel to Tamworth a few days later to be properly plastered - days off work and school, travel expenses. They then expected we would return to have plaster removed 6wks later- full day off work, school, fuel costs. Luckily asked around and was able to have the local physio in Narrabri removed the cast, he was 10 minutes late for school, rather than missing a whole day of work and school!

For the above issues, we were fortunate to be told by a fellow patient that we could claim some travel expenses from the patient transport scheme... nowhere near covers the full costs, but always appreciated whatever reimbursements we received. This scheme also isn't very well advertised by medical staff, and the required paperwork ties up valuable doctor time!

Christmas eve one year, Narrabri emergency for suspected appendicitis... one locum doctor on call, flat out, suggested I drive patient to Tamworth as no ambulances available). Leave kids with kind neighbours for over 14hrs. Travel to Tamworth, leave patient there, return to Narrabri about 2am in time for Christmas with kids. Head back to Tamworth first thing Christmas morning to collect patient once recovered. Totally exhausting and probably dangerous, but just what you have to do in the bush. Am sure most doctors have no appreciation of distances travelled.

A lot of outlying hospitals seem to be little more than nurse stations these days, with majority of issues requiring travel to 'rural referral hospitals' this may save the govt \$\$, but it costs patients and their families a lot of money. Those who can't afford it often just miss out on the help they need. No wonder health outcomes are worse in the bush! We need to see higher nursing ratios in hospital, more doctors rostered on, more surgery done at smaller hospitals (including the ability to deal with simple greenstick fractures). Rural towns need physios, counsellors, speech therapists, OTs, etc... if the govt have to offer higher wages to attract them, so be it, we shouldn't have to suffer ill health due to govt being tight with their budgets. We all pay our taxes!