

Submission  
No 536

**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

Wait times are appalling at the local doctor's surgery - pre-covid I would phone prior to any appointment to find out how behind the doctor was. The problem is not quality or lack of doctors (though this does make an impact throughout the year as residents come and go - this could be better managed but I'm not sure if that's the local practice at fault) - it's the ridiculously short appointment times allocated.

Also, I don't know why but there seem to be 100 admin staff at the Doctor's surgery and only 5 or 6 doctors, which to me seems a ridiculous waste of money. I'm not across recruitment requirements in health so I don't know if so many admin staff are mandated? They never seem to have been in Sydney practices I've attended.

Blood testing and X-ray facilities are good, as is physiotherapy. Excellent even. Things like podiatry and exercise physiology et al that come under Care Plans should be 100% covered - but again I don't know if this is a local practice fee-charging system or NSW Government mandate. Or are Care plans Federal - not the mental health ones, the other ones...? Sorry...!

Dental is overpriced here and you save money by getting out of town but thus clogging up larger town/city practices and roads and so forth in order to have anything done on your teeth.

Pharmacies are fine here. Terrific even. I don't like some of their business practices but in terms of quality of care, they're terrific.

For specialist testing (MRIs/CT scans etc) we need to travel to Taree/Forster/Newcastle etc. This is the same with all Specialist Medical care, including Mental Health Care, which in a town like ours is lacking. Wait times to see specialists vary depending of course on urgency and how much one is prepared to pay, but generally, they are not good, and the stress of travel and potential added expense (travel/accommodation to accompany one's spouse for example is an enormous extra expense for any overnight or longer stays.)

For a lot of older country people, the thought of going just to Newcastle from Gloucester is an abomination and I can safely say that the only time my parents will travel to Sydney from now until they die is only for a funeral and only if someone drives them to said funeral and drives them back the self-same day. They're not alone in that.

When my father had radiation for cancer in Port Macquarie (the closest facility) we were lucky for the Rotary lodge on Hospital Grounds specifically built for this purpose, but this is not the case with - for example - any emergency that requires long stays in a city, or even planned non-/elective surgery (stents, valves etc) that may need a couple of nights stay as well. Surgeons can travel one day a month to a town like this and not only be praised and hero-worshipped, but provide a great essential service, reduce the need for wait times, and even provide terrific learning opps for the locals as well.

They could even use a room at the local Hospital here as a consultations room if it came under NSW Health: This kind of plan could even offer a money boost for NSW Health coffers

as well. Should more actual surgeries be performed here or just anywhere outside the larger metro areas, that'd be more money for NSW Health in the long term as well.

Areas like ours - with largely ageing populations - a new aged care home just opened here - need you in Government, in the Dept of Health to think about these issues. So - if its funding for Doctors to travel, make it easy for them. They're doctors - they really don't need to be doing paperwork for days on this - a one page form is enough.

If you choose to make funding available for patients/spouses to stay in a city etc - make it easy enough to access for the people who have not seen or used the internet in their lives.

Again - a one page form. Ridiculous amounts of paperwork add only pressure to already highly pressured lives (you know: bushfires, droughts and flooding rains.)

Also - any medical professional relocating to a rural area needs to understand with our older population that they've often worked on a tractor or used a chainsaw/loud machinery etc for 50 years and the first 25 of those years were before ear protection was ever recommended so they need to be triply briefed (smacked around the head even!) to make sure they are understood completely by the patient by any means necessary - speak clearly! If they're not understood or they do not understand, say so and work around it.

We are all just people - an old man exiting an appointment with a Doctor frantic because their medication has been changed or they weren't understood or didn't understand is not in the best interest of anyone's health. Also know that these people will often not speak up, because Doctors are a figure of authority and respect. Don't abuse that - write down a question for goodness' sake. Bedside manner is part of being a doctor.

Finally - to you in Government: stop shutting things down and selling things off. Fund more, build more and renovate more of our existing health facilities now and remember that we are a people first. The economy is a very distant second. If Covid hasn't taught us that yet there is not a vaccine in the world that can help us.

Telehealth is a DISASTER in the country. Phone service is terrible, electricity blackouts and brownouts are common and it should only be used in case of an absolute emergency. Let alone the hearing issues many face with telephonic devices.

Thank you for your kind attention.