

Submission
No 540

**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

Thank you for holding this inquiry into rural health.

I always took my access health care for granted, I never had to wait very long for an appointment, I could pick and choose the doctor / specialist I felt comfortable with, and the reason why was because I lived in a city.

7 years ago I moved to a country town with a population of around 10,000 people and all those choices went out the window.

I have little choice in what doctor I want as most of the doctors in town books are closed, even to the point when a person has a baby these doctor can't treat the child as his books are closed, leaving the parents distraught and confused. The doctors that were available at the time when I first arrived were from overseas as it was part of their requirements to do time in rural communities before they could practice in the cities. They had little interest in developing relationships with their patients as they knew as soon as their time was up they would go.

Over the last several years since I have arrived many doctors have left through choice or in some cases through poor management, for example our only health centre which was built with community raised funds has had to close multiple times due to inept, incompetent board members, that pushed the few doctors that were willing to stay to the brink.

The government has provided 4 million dollars for a hospital upgrade which is fantastic, but with virtually no doctors to man it, it will probably never be used to full capability.

The doctors we currently have are all from private practices and are exhausted as they split their time between running their practices, visiting nursing homes and doing shifts at the hospital, all this while trying to have time for themselves and their families.

The government needs to put incentives in place to entice and retain doctors in rural communities.

This could take many forms from reducing new doctors university fees on a sliding scale i.e. the longer they stay the more assistance they receive. Insurance and general practice subsidies. There are many things that could be offered to assist new doctors relocating to rural towns.

Our doctors are overwhelmed and overworked the last thing that they should be worried about is how they balance their books each month.

All people in rural communities want is access good quality local health care, access to supporting services and consistent health care with preferably a doctor of their choose.

This isn't asking for anymore than people who live in the cities have, it's not right that people who live in rural town and already do it tough through isolation and environmental stresses deal with daily.

People who live in rural areas also suffer from high rates of suicide so mental health services are also essential. I was totally ignorant of the roll country people play in providing for this country till I moved here and saw it first hand. Watching the relief and joy in farmers faces when it rains after years of drought, seeing the look on children's faces who had never seen rain is something that I will never forget.

We need to ensure we don't lose future farmers to either suicide or to cities!

Please remember it's the people who choose to live in rural areas that provide the resources for people to live comfortably in the cities with full bellies, and clothes on their backs.

In this country access to good health care is a right not a privilege, you need to make sure that all Australians have that access.

Thank you.