

Submission
No 110

**INQUIRY INTO EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND
APPROPRIATE DELIVERY OF OUTPATIENT AND
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 5 September 2023

Partially
Confidential

INQUIRY INTO THE EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND APPROPRIATE DELIVERY OF OUTPATIENT AND COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Thank you for the opportunity to submit as a community member to the above inquiry.

I live in rural NSW. I have access to a Multi-Purpose Service facility about one hour's travel away, and a larger hospital about one and a half hours away. The MPS does not have access to an on-site doctor, so getting even minimal medical care like stitching a wound is unavailable. Having easy access to a local general practitioner has become a rare event.

My husband has been suffering mental illness for well over a decade. It took about five years to get to a stage for his mental illness to become somewhat manageable, and a medical pathway to access appropriate help. Initial access for care was difficult, as the only way we could get an appointment for any help was if he was threatening to self-harm. To have to wait until my husband was ready to pull the trigger before we could receive any assistance was upsetting, confusing and very difficult for him as a sufferer, and his family trying to care for him.

Rural and remote communities are offered Telehealth as a way of accessing medical help. This system failed for me when I tried to use it from home. I could not get past step one. Telehealth required me receiving an SMS message for validation purposes. I do not have mobile reception at home. I cannot access Telehealth from my residence.

Incidentally, whenever I see a trigger warning on the television and told to ring Lifeline etc I shudder. Their "assistance" is to direct you to a system they do not understand the limitations of, especially for people in rural and remote communities. I don't think these trigger warnings are very helpful for people having difficulty accessing appropriate mental health care. Every time I see a trigger warning I am reminded of the feelings of helplessness and difficulty we had accessing appropriate mental health care for my husband.

My husband's mental health is an ongoing issue, and even though we have established an effective pathway to access appropriate help, appointments with appropriate medical professionals are still difficult to secure in a timely manner. A three to four week wait for an appointment is a lifetime for some.