

**Submission
No 159**

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

Name: Fay Jackson

Date Received: 27 October 2023

Thursday 26 October 2023.

Attention : Amanda Cohn

With respect and urgency, I beseech the government to hold a Regional Hearing to be conducted in the Northern Rivers area of NSW into the desperate lack housing, human and mental health services in our area. As the Inaugural Deputy Commissioner of the NSW MH Commission and as a National mental health advocate I am aware that all rural and remote areas of Australia suffer a lack of equity, accessibility and appropriate delivery of outpatient and community mental health care. However in our region, the situation is more dior and unique. While we had a high percentage of people who are homeless and suffering severe mental health issues and suicidality before the floods and landslides, these events have dramatically increased the gravity of despair and hopelessness our community is experiencing. As a community member and mental health advocate, I speak with people on a daily basis who are suicidal, or concerned about a person who is. However, they are unable to access any appropriate care within the time that appropriate care may save their lives. In the past week, I have heard from friends and families of three young people who have taken their lives. We are in the depths of of communal despair and PTSD.

Many of the mental health and human services staff who had been providing what services they could in severely underfunded circumstances before the fires and floods, are suffering their own distress and homelessness. What hope does our community have to hold onto when the 'carers' of our community are unable to 'care' for their families and hold hope for improved life outcomes. It is my understanding that our region now has larger numbers of people sleeping rough than Sydney yet with a tiny fraction of the services offered in Sydney. It is also my understanding that as of this week, we now have the highest suicide rate for any region. Last week, I spoke with one of our paramedics who was in tears about the critical state of peoples lives and this area. Through tears they told me "we just cant keep going like this. My colleagues, police I know and nurses at A&E are telling me they intend to resign. What is to become of us!"

With the awareness that unless you live here, you cannot realistically conceive of the desperate situation we are in, I ask you, as a member of our desperate community, a mother, grandmother and advocate, to attempt to place yourselves in our shoes; Walking my dog, every day, I come across or am approached by people who are homeless and suicidal. I hold people as they cry in my arms about the guilt they feel being unable to provide safe housing for their small children or their older mother who needs care. I listen to people whose hair is falling out, and who are acquiring stress induced illnesses, that are unable to access any services that cannot give them long term hope, let alone hope in the short term for the changes needed.

I am aware, that as a person holding public office, you need to distance yourselves emotionally, to be able to sustain your career; However, on top of the extreme trauma our community suffered during the floods, the lack of services, government supports and hope for a safe future, our community are suffering increasing layers of trauma as our children, mums and dads take their lives; As our older people are rendered homeless and left to die without the supports they need; As our families place their children into foster care because they cannot provide homes for them; and as single

people and families surrender their beloved pets because they cannot take care of themselves let alone their much loved pets.

I ask you, MP Amanda Cohn, to urgently hold a Regional Hearing for Equity, Accessibility and Appropriate Delivery of Outpatient and Community Mental Health Care in New South Wales.

Sincerely

Fay Jackson

Inaugural Deputy Commissioner, NSW MH Commission

General Manager of Inclusion, Flourish Australia

Founder of Vision In Mind

Northern Rivers Mud Army and Community Member.