

NSW Government Response

Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health

Inquiry into the Operation and Management of the Northern Beaches Hospital

August 2020



INTRODUCTION

In February 2020, the Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 2 – Health released the Final Report for their Inquiry into the Operation and Management of the Northern Beaches Hospital. The Report contained one finding and 23 recommendations.

The Northern Beaches Hospital was a key component of the broader Northern Beaches Health Service Redevelopment Project and opened on 30 October 2018. The Redevelopment Project also included the construction of the Brookvale Community Health Centre, Mona Vale Community Health Centre, Dalwood Child and Family Health Centre.

Northern Beaches Hospital consolidated the acute care services of Manly Hospital and Mona Vale Hospital, providing residents of the Northern Beaches with enhanced access to more complex care closer to home, including a state of the art emergency department, an advanced intensive care unit, and updated surgical facilities.

NSW Health has entered into a long-term partnership with provider Healthscope to deliver public patient services at Northern Beaches Hospital over the next 20 years. By delivering the Hospital through the Public Private Partnership model, the NSW Government was able to maximise the range and breadth of health services available to the Northern Beaches community.

Healthscope is required to deliver services to public patients at the standard expected of all NSW Public Hospitals. The NSW Government welcomes the opportunity to continue to strengthen the partnership with Healthscope, and is committed to ensuring a high quality of care and services are provided to the Northern Beaches community.

Healthscope has acknowledged and apologised for the operational issues which arose following the opening of Northern Beaches Hospital, and has restated their commitment to ongoing improvement and high quality patient outcomes. These improvements have been evidenced through the Hospital's performance results each month: emergency department performance is now among the best in NSW, patient experience ratings have consistently been higher than NSW peer hospitals, and elective surgery wait times are consistent with NSW Health recommended timeframes.

The NSW Government will continue to monitor the Hospital's performance to ensure high quality healthcare is provided to the Northern Beaches community.

The NSW Government has reviewed the recommendations in the Committee's Final Report and has provided the attached response. A number of recommendations identified in the Committee's Final Report are already being worked towards in collaboration with Healthscope and other external stakeholders.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

That in order to build the community's trust in the Northern Beaches Hospital and enable community members to make informed choices about how they access care, NSW Health and Healthscope immediately and significantly enhance transparency by publishing information on an ongoing basis with respect to:

- ***all inpatient and outpatient services available at the hospital to public and private patients***
- ***out of pocket patient costs.***

Supported

Information relating to available inpatient and outpatient services for both public and private patients is published on the Northern Beaches Hospital website.

The Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) will work in partnership with Healthscope to ensure this information is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 2

That NSW Health and Healthscope ensure that the same levels and standards of care are provided to public and private patients at the Northern Beaches Hospital.

Supported

Healthscope has confirmed that standards of care for public and private patients are equal, irrespective of financial class. Safety and quality at Northern Beaches Hospital is consistently monitored by NSW Health through regular reporting of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Healthscope are required to provide clinical services at the role delineation levels specified in the Northern Beaches Hospital Project Deed. Northern Beaches Hospital provides the Northern Beaches community with access to more complex clinical care and a broader range of specialist services than was previously available at Mona Vale and Manly Hospitals.

Recommendation 3

That NSW Health ensure that the Northern Beaches Hospital is able to provide all coronary intervention treatments available to private patients to public patients also, regardless of the urgency of their need.

Supported

A 24/7 Interventional Cardiology Service is available to all patients presenting to the Northern Beaches Hospital Emergency Department, irrespective of health insurance status.

Operational Readiness Testing is currently underway for the implementation of a model of care known as PAPA (Pre-hospital Assessment for Primary Angioplasty). This will allow suspected heart attack patients to arrive at Northern Beaches Hospital via NSW Ambulance and receive expedited interventional cardiology treatment.

Recommendation 4

That NSW Health determine and inform the public of:

- ***the boundaries for ethical business practices at the Northern Beaches Hospital***
- ***the appropriate mechanism to investigate allegations of business conduct that is not in the interests of individual patients or the broader community.***

Supported

Healthscope and Northern Beaches Hospital are committed to maintaining the highest levels of integrity and ethical standards.

Northern Beaches Hospital is obliged to provide services in accordance with Medicare Principles and all relevant NSW and Commonwealth legislation. These obligations are clearly documented without contractual, regulation or legislative amendment being required.

Healthscope's Code of Conduct sets the standards of integrity and business ethics expected in its workplaces. The Code ensures employees are aware of the consequences, should the Code be breached.

Healthscope's Board is also committed to maintaining high standards of corporate governance and has adopted a system of internal controls, risk management processes and corporate governance policies and practices to support and promote the responsible management and conduct of business.

Allegations of unethical business practices are significant and will be urgently investigated. Investigation of allegations will occur within the established Northern Beaches Hospital project governance and will be referred to further appropriate agencies, including NSW Police, as required.

Healthscope is guided by various laws which cover its business. There are also a number of mechanisms that guide and monitor ethical business conduct and any allegations including:

- The NSW Health Care Complaints Commission, which will investigate complaints about health care organisations and can also initiate an "own motion" complaint if it becomes aware of significant risks to public health and safety or significant concerns about a health service provider;
- The NSW Ministry of Health Regulation and Compliance Unit, which monitors private health facilities to ensure compliance with the NSW licensing standards set by the *Private Health Facilities Act 2007* (NSW) and the *Private Health Facilities Regulation 2017* (NSW);
- The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), which works in partnership with 15 National Boards to ensure the community has access to a safe health workforce across all professions registered under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. It is guided by the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

Recommendation 5

That Healthscope ensure that appropriate signage is erected at the Northern Beaches Hospital's points of admission which notifies patients of their right to treatment as a public patient at no cost.

Supported

Signage notifying patients of their rights is presented in the Northern Beaches Hospital Emergency Department. The right to be treated as a public patient or to use private health insurance is also verbally explained to the patient, in line with NSW Public Hospitals.

All care provided through the Northern Beaches Hospital Emergency Department is provided at no charge to Medicare eligible patients, and patients who need to be admitted to the hospital for ongoing care can choose to be admitted as a public or private patient. All patients naturally receive emergency clinical care, irrespective of their Medicare status.

Northern Beaches Hospital provides appropriate treatment for all people who present at or are referred to the hospital. All public patients receive the care that they need, consistent with the treatment they would receive in other public hospitals.

Recommendation 6

That NSW Health better support non acute care and address the need for outpatient services at the Northern Beaches Hospital by:

- ***reinstating previously available public specialist clinics, with priority given to cardiology and neurology***
- ***enhancing paediatric outpatient services***
- ***addressing the long existing gaps in gastroenterology, ophthalmology and orthopaedic outpatient services***
- ***ensuring outpatient services for public patients are bulk billed.***

Noted

To ensure alignment to the evolving needs of the Northern Beaches community, NSW Health is currently working with Healthscope to review the scope of outpatient services at Northern Beaches Hospital.

Information regarding outpatient services available to public patients is regularly updated on the Northern Beaches Hospital website.

Recommendation 7

That NSW Health and Healthscope publish data on rates of intervention in respect of all births that have occurred at the Northern Beaches Hospital, and actively monitor these figures to ensure that maternity related options and outcomes for public patients are consistent with those in the public hospital system.

Supported

In line with NSW Public Hospitals, rates of birth intervention at Northern Beaches Hospital are published in the annual NSW Mothers and Babies Report.

The NSLHD and Northern Beaches Hospital will actively monitor rates of birth intervention through the established performance meetings to ensure maternity outcomes are consistent with other peer hospitals.

Recommendation 8

That the Northern Sydney Local Health District work with Healthscope to extend the option for midwife group practice to all patients and provide birthing baths in all birthing suites.

Noted

The NSLHD is undertaking a District-wide review of midwifery group practice to assess community needs and inform further service development. The NSLHD will also consult with Northern Beaches Hospital and the NSW Ministry of Health through this process.

All public maternity patients at Northern Beaches Hospital have the option to use a birthing bath if preferred. Northern Beaches Hospital will undertake review of birthing bath utilisation to assess whether additional baths are required to support the current maternity service, subject to feasibility.

Recommendation 9

That the NSW Government take immediate steps to engage directly with Northern Beaches state Members of Parliament, community leaders and other stakeholders to investigate the ways and means to restore a public level 3 emergency department to the Mona Vale Hospital as soon as possible.

Not supported

NSW Health will continue to work closely with all stakeholders regarding the provision of clinical services across the Northern Beaches.

Northern Beaches Hospital now provides the Northern Beaches community with access to more complex clinical care and a broader range of specialist services than was previously available at Mona Vale and Manly Hospitals, including:

- 50 emergency bays compared to 30 bays previously
- 14 operating theatres compared to 5 previously
- 20 intensive care beds compared to 13 previously
- 40 maternity beds compared to 31 previously

More complex maternity, emergency, intensive care and surgical services are being provided, as well as a range of imaging and diagnostic services. This means the community can access specialist services closer to home, including MRI and high level pathology services.

Other examples of extra services include the capacity to care for pregnant women giving birth from 32 weeks, a 14 bed special care nursery that is able to care for babies from 32 weeks, emergency cardiac catheterisation and surgery, more specialised orthopaedic surgery, and plastic surgery.

The services currently delivered at the Mona Vale Hospital Urgent Care Centre provide the community access to urgent clinical care close to home, with the back-up of a major acute hospital nearby. Patient feedback on the services provided at the Urgent Care Centre has been very positive.

Recommendation 10

That NSW Health undertake an audit on the complete range of medical and health services on the Mona Vale Hospital site to confirm that what is available accords precisely with what has been produced in both written and electronic form and is in the public domain. Further, that information regarding the services be continuously updated as the services develop and evolve.

Supported

A comprehensive list of the services available at Mona Vale Hospital is provided on the NSLHD website. This list is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

The NSLHD website is currently undergoing a redesign, with the new website expected to launch in September 2020. The new design will improve website usability, and will include additional information for Mona Vale Hospital services including referral pathways.

Recommendation 11

That NSW Health and the Northern Sydney Local Health District, on an ongoing basis, positively consider opportunities to expand both the range and availability of medical and health services that are offered at the Mona Vale Hospital.

Supported

NSW Health will continue to consider the range of services that are suitable to be provided from the Mona Vale Hospital campus.

New specialist facilities are already under construction or completed, including a new inpatient Palliative Care Unit and Geriatric Evaluation and Management Unit, refurbishment of the existing Emergency Department to create an Urgent Care Centre, a new Support Services Building, a relocated helipad, a new drug and alcohol rehabilitation unit, and a new NSW Ambulance Station.

Recommendation 12

That the Northern Sydney Local Health District monitor over time the effectiveness of both the Northern Beaches Hospital and the Mona Vale Hospital in meeting the health needs of the communities they serve, including for emergency care. Further, that it establish a mechanism, beyond the current limited Bureau of Health Information data published quarterly, for ongoing reporting to communities, for the purposes of transparency, engagement and building trust.

Noted

Monitoring of effectiveness is being undertaken through performance reporting of Northern Beaches Hospital and Mona Vale Hospital, as well as feedback from NSW Ambulance and the Emergency and Critical Care Network.

As well as the Bureau of Health Information data, a number of safety and quality performance indicators are also published on the Northern Beaches Hospital website at: <https://healthscopehospitals.com.au/quality/my-healthscope/northern-beaches>.

NSW Health will work with Healthscope to review the publicly reported data for Northern Beaches Hospital, and consider expansion of this report in line with other NSW Public Hospitals.

Recommendation 13

That the Northern Sydney Local Health District make full and proactive use of its ability to adjust the activity profile of the Northern Beaches Hospital according to the community's evolving needs, both via the 'annual notice' process and renegotiation of specific aspects of the deed.

Supported

As a requirement within the Northern Beaches Hospital Project Deed, the Activity Profile for Northern Beaches Hospital must be assessed and revised each year to ensure alignment to the evolving needs of the Northern Beaches community.

NSW Health have already applied a range of adjustments to the Activity Profile for Northern Beaches Hospital since opening, including the addition of a 24/7 Interventional Cardiology Service.

Recommendation 14

That the Northern Sydney Local Health District and Healthscope formally request, on behalf of the residents of the Northern Beaches, that Transport for NSW establish by mid-2020 a regular direct bus service from Palm Beach on the Pittwater Peninsula to the Northern Beaches Hospital via the Wakehurst Parkway.

Noted

Transport for NSW introduced a new bus route from Mona Vale to Northern Beaches Hospital in late 2019.

Route 155 provides an hourly service between Mona Vale, Narrabeen and the Hospital seven days a week. This new route is part of the NSW Government's commitment to introduce 14,000 extra weekly bus services.

Residents living in the Pittwater area between Palm Beach and Mona Vale can use regular route 199 services and transfer to route 155 at Mona Vale or Narrabeen for access to the Hospital.

Recommendation 15

That the Northern Sydney Local Health District and Healthscope formally request, on behalf of the residents of the Northern Beaches, that Transport for NSW look at alternative options to widening the Wakehurst Parkway given flooding and other environmental constraints.

Supported

Transport for NSW contributed \$5 million to Northern Beaches Council's study on flood mitigation options. The Wakehurst Parkway flood mitigation options which arose from this study are currently under review.

Recommendation 16

That the NSW Government ensure that the land on which the Mona Vale and Manly Hospitals sit always remain in public hands for health and medical related activities, and that 99 year or other similar long term leasing arrangements not be entered into for the sites.

Supported

The NSW Government asset strategy for the former Manly Hospital site will see the property re-purposed for health and wellbeing use, including the construction of an Adolescence and Young

Adults Hospice. Community engagement has commenced with support from the local member and the Council.

The Mona Vale Hospital site will continue to be used both for public and private health and medical purposes.

Recommendation 17

That the NSW Government cease demolition of the Mona Vale Hospital main building after asbestos removal is complete and retain this public asset for future use.

Not supported

Significant amounts of asbestos are present throughout the Mona Vale Hospital Main Building. Additional asbestos was identified during the demolition process within structural elements, cavities, embedded within concrete and within the building's façade. The building is no longer structurally sound, and demolition of the West Wing is in progress.

New specialist facilities are already under construction or completed including a new inpatient Palliative Care Unit and Geriatric Evaluation and Management Unit, refurbishment of the existing Emergency Department to create an Urgent Care Centre, a new Support Services Building, a relocated helipad, a new drug and alcohol rehabilitation unit, and a new NSW Ambulance Station.

Recommendation 18

That the Northern Sydney Local Health District and Healthscope:

- ***take further action to fully integrate the Northern Beaches Hospital into the operations of the local health district, including in the hospital's working relationship with other hospitals***
- ***establish integration as a formal item for reporting and discussion in the local health district's fortnightly meetings with Healthscope.***

Supported

The NSLHD and Northern Beaches Hospital have a strong and collaborative relationship. Northern Beaches Hospital is directly involved in a range of NSLHD committees, working groups, clinical case conferences and interface meetings. The NSLHD continues to actively support partnerships between NSLHD Clinical Networks and Northern Beaches Hospital clinical teams.

To further the integration of Northern Beaches Hospital with the NSLHD, a new Clinical Integration Committee has been proposed. The Clinical Integration Committee will include representatives from both the NSLHD and Northern Beaches Hospital, with the primary aim of supporting the delivery of high-quality patient care by strengthening current operational links and driving further opportunities for collaboration.

The 'Key Service Linkage Directory' details the established service linkages between Northern Beaches Hospital and NSLHD services to streamline referral processes for public patients. This is updated on a regular basis and is accessible to both NSLHD and Northern Beaches Hospital staff.

Recommendation 19

That Northern Beaches Hospital collaborate with community based services, including health clinics, to improve its linking of patients, and especially vulnerable patients, into services. In doing so, that it:

- ***jointly develop and trial a care navigation model enabling immediate access and support for patients at risk following admission***
- ***participate in a joint care planning process with key community care providers in discharge planning for patients with high and complex care needs***
- ***enhance its understanding of the eligibility criteria for a range of community services and supports.***

Supported

Northern Beaches Hospital works closely with community-based health services to ensure collaborative care, especially for vulnerable or at-risk patients. This includes regular interface meetings and case conferences with community care teams, and improved referral pathways into community services.

Northern Beaches Hospital also meets regularly with the Northern Sydney Primary Health Network to collaborate on key health issues affecting the local area.

Northern Beaches Hospital and the NSLHD will continue to work together with Northern Sydney Primary Health Network to investigate and implement strategies to improve care navigation and joint care planning, including discharge planning.

The NSLHD will support Northern Beaches Hospital by ensuring regular communication of updates to eligibility criteria or lead times for community services and supports.

Recommendation 20

That the Northern Sydney Local Health District and Healthscope examine and act on further ways to provide quality discharge planning and effective linkage of patients into community based services.

Supported

Discharge planning is a key priority for both NSW Health and Northern Beaches Hospital to ensure effective continuity of care, with work currently underway to enhance the discharge planning process. This includes implementation of strategies to streamline access to discharge information for community care providers.

Referral pathways into community health services are captured and regularly updated within the 'Key Service Linkage Directory'. This supports effective linkage of patients into community care by providing clinicians with detailed information around community referral pathways and key NSLHD and Northern Beaches Hospital contacts.

Recommendation 21

That Healthscope and the Northern Beaches Hospital continue to build a culture of respect and collaboration with general practitioners and community based services, including by establishing:

- *ongoing mechanisms for these stakeholders to meet regularly with senior representatives of the hospital and the Northern Sydney Local Health District to resolve issues and build partnerships*
- *proactive and regular communication to local general practitioners on jointly identified matters of importance via mechanisms to be jointly agreed*
- *a dedicated general practice liaison role with a clinical background to support communication regarding individual patients and troubleshoot matters as they arise.*

Supported

The NSLHD will continue to support Northern Beaches Hospital in building a strong and collaborative relationship with the Northern Sydney Primary Health Network.

Northern Beaches Hospital and the Northern Sydney Primary Health Network now meet formally on a bimonthly basis to discuss and progress key issues. These meetings provide a forum to regularly communicate with general practitioners (GPs) and have supported and improved GP collaboration.

Northern Beaches Hospital also proactively communicates to local GPs through a regular newsletter.

A new GP liaison role has been implemented at Northern Beaches Hospital, providing a single point of contact for any GP-related matters.

A series of education courses are also being hosted at Northern Beaches Hospital to allow GPs to receive their Continuing Professional Development at the Hospital.

Recommendation 22

That the NSW Government not enter into any public private partnerships for future public hospitals.

Noted

No public private partnerships are currently being pursued in relation to NSW Hospitals.

Recommendation 23

That the Northern Beaches Hospital develop, publish and implement a community participation and engagement plan that:

- *recognises the fundamental value of consumer perspectives for the planning, delivery and evaluation of health services*
- *guides the hospital to engage better with the community it serves.*

Supported

The Northern Beaches Hospital Community Participation and Engagement Plan has been developed and is updated each year.

Further to this, Northern Beaches Hospital is in the final stages of developing a Stakeholder Engagement Framework which will include community, consumers, staff and volunteers. This Framework will clearly set out what community can expect from Northern Beaches Hospital, including community involvement activities.

As part of the Framework, a Community Advisory Council will be established to provide community participation and codesign opportunities.