



The Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association Inc.

www.pbwba.org.au | PO Box 2 Palm Beach NSW 2108

Celebrating our Centenary 1918 - 2018

The Hon Robert Stokes MP.

Parliament House Sydney.

Dear Minister,

MEDICAL SERVICES ON THE NORTHERN BEACHES

The Palm Beach and Whale Beach community still has many concerns about the downgrading of Mona Vale Hospital particularly the loss of the Emergency Department. Additionally, we are concerned about the gaps in the services to be provided by the new Northern Beaches Hospital at Frenchs Forest..

MONA VALE HOSPITAL SERVICES

The nearest Emergency Department will be located at the Northern beaches Hospital Frenchs Forest. The focus of the Mona Vale "hospital" will then be aged care, rehabilitation, palliative care and community health.

However, this by definition is NOT a hospital. A hospital must have an Emergency Department, medical and surgical beds and operating theatres. It is misleading to call Mona Vale Hospital a hospital and gives the Community a false sense of security. It should be called a health campus.

Although there will be a 24 hour "Urgent Care Centre" for minor injuries and illnesses such as minor burns, minor sports injuries, minor cuts, minor fractures. Patients with more serious or life threatening conditions will need to call an ambulance or present at Northern Beaches Hospital Frenchs Forest a 40-50 minute trip by car from Palm Beach. We believe the Emergency Department at Mona Vale Hospital MUST be retained. At minimum, the proposed Urgent Care Centre at Mona Vale must be staffed by doctors and nurses fully trained in Emergency Medicine. The recent recruitment campaign indicates this may not be the case. The medical staff must be

able to resuscitate and stabilise critically ill patients.

In the year 2016-2017 there were 35,000 presentations at Mona Vale ED a number which has been growing at 2.4% pa over the last five years. Of these, the proportion classified as emergency patients has grown from 8.8% in 2012/13 to 13.5% in 2016/17. This is a substantial increase and demonstrates the need for emergency services in more than one location. To have only one Emergency Department particularly located 30 km from parts of the Northern Beaches along narrow restricted roads which are subject to flooding, will have severe implications for patient outcomes.

ACCESSIBILITY TO NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mona Vale Hospital is approximately 12 km from Palm Beach whereas the new hospital at Frenchs Forest is 30 km along narrow congested roads including one lane only for the length of Wakehurst Parkway. Normal bus service to the hospital will be via Dee Why and will necessitate a bus change and take 1 hr 30min. to 1hr.50min. for a single journey. A direct bus service from Pittwater to the hospital along Wakehurst Parkway is essential. We understand the NSW Government is about to sign off on a shuttle bus service four times a day from Mona Vale Hospital to Frenchs Forest but it is essential that residents of Pittwater are able to access a direct bus without driving to Mona Vale Hospital where considerable extra parking will be required.

AMBULANCE AVAILABILITY FOR URGENT RESPONSES

Ambulance response times in Pittwater are problematic. The benchmark response times for critically ill patients is 15 minutes. It is vital that the Avalon Ambulance Station be fully resourced to a fully functioning ambulance station 24 hours a day. At present the ambulance paramedics pick up an ambulance when their shift commences and go roving all over Sydney. Many patients are already long experiencing delays and this will only increase. The ambulance station was sold off in 2002 and is currently leased back to the government. It is a vital link to Pittwater residents.

NORTHERN BEACHES HOSPITAL FACILITIES

STROKE UNIT

Northern Beaches Hospital is a state of the art public/private level 5 facility (Royal North Shore Hospital (RNSH) is level 6). We are extremely concerned that a fully functioning stroke unit may not be provided at Frenchs Forest. It is likely that patients requiring this treatment will have to be transferred to RNSH. Patients treated in a dedicated stroke unit have a much better outcome. The unit needs to be comprehensive and able to give thrombolysis treatments to dissolve clots for the best outcomes. This treatment needs to be given within 3 hours.

CARDIAC UNIT

We need a comprehensive Cardiac Unit at the Northern Beaches Hospital at Frenchs Forest including surgeons who are able to perform open heart surgery on ALL patients.

Coronary heart disease and cerebrovascular disease are two of the three leading causes of death in Australia so the appropriate departments should be high priority.

These are all matters of critical importance and concern to our Community. To quote

The Hon. Rob Stokes, Member for Pittwater, from Hansard NSW Parliament 3 April 2008:

“the residents of Pittwater desperately need a guaranteed future for Mona Vale Hospital and the assurance that in an emergency they can get early access and early treatment at Mona Vale”.

Yours sincerely,

A/Professor Richard West AM MB.BS(Syd) FRACS FRCS(ENG)

VMO Surgeon Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

President Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association.