

**Submission
No 39**

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE No. 2
RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL HEALTH
REFORM AND GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION WITH REMOTE, RURAL AND
REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

Name: Ms Samantha Cosgrove

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My husband and I live 12.5kms North of Gulgong, and have lived on this property for over 20 years. Prior to that I lived nearby, also on a property and have lived at Gulgong my whole life.

As we both work in Mudgee we have attended the Doctors there on occasion, however when ill and when our son was ill, we have attended Gulgong Medical Centre on many occasions, as Gulgong is a 10-15 minute drive for us, and Mudgee is around 35 minutes.

In recent years, there frequently hasn't been a Dr at Gulgong, and currently there are none. Both surgeries in Mudgee have now closed their books to new patients due to a chronic Doctor shortage. The nearby town of Dunedoo also currently has no Doctors.

I had luckily attended recently enough at Southside surgery so am able to attend there, but for many years haven't had a regular GP as it can be hard to get in to the same person. A lot of the doctors also come for short term placements and then move on, or switch from one surgery to another so you can no longer see them as the books are closed at the other surgery.

My husband was suffering with ill health early this year, but was told by Southside that he hadn't attended recently enough, so he had to move to Mudgee Medical Centre (and was luckily allowed to go there as it was before the books were closed, and he had been there in the past when he couldn't get an appointment anywhere else). This means we have no "family doctor" as we have to attend different surgeries.

My 20 year old son, who now lives in Gulgong township, has attended both surgeries over his life, was denied an appointment at both surgeries, even though it was only a few years since he had attended. He has been forced on occasion to attend the Gulgong MPS (once recently with pneumonia). As there is no attending Doctor visits to the MPS rely on virtual consultations with doctors around the region. He is a third year electrical apprentice so requires a medical certificate when sick, which is another challenge for regional people as you can't get the appointment to get a certificate.

I myself recently had surgery, and last week developed an infection in the surgical wound. Feeling that this complication required a physical examination, and as it was a Saturday, I traveled the 35 minutes to Mudgee Hospital Emergency, was triaged but then waited for over 3 hours in severe pain, as there were several other patients waiting while others walked in the door and were taken in immediately. I understand the need to triage urgent cases however my condition made it impossible to sit in the uncomfortable hard plastic chairs in the waiting area.

The fact that there are no doctors appointments available for people who aren't previous patients of the Mudgee surgeries, is adding to the strain on the Emergency Departments, as people have no choice but to go to the hospital as it is the only way they can see a Dr when ill., Even if you are "on the books" you still have to phone the surgery at 8:30am if you require an urgent appointment and hope that you are lucky enough to secure an appointment, as many other people are also phoning at the same time and there are a limited number of appointments.

I was eventually seen and was advised I had an abscess that Mudgee couldn't treat (despite having the initial surgery there) and was told to present to Orange Base Hospital at 8am on Sunday.

After being sent home from Mudgee and getting home at 11pm my husband and I had to make the 2.5 hour trip to Orange and get there by 8am where I then still had to wait for a while before being seen as even though the ED Dr in Mudgee had written copious notes, the triage process had to be redone.

I was then admitted and can't fault the care I received, however have been sent home three days later, and the next day developed Covid 19 which I contracted in the hospital.

As mentioned, I am one of the lucky ones who is allowed to remain a patient at Southside Surgery, and I have now been able to see a great GP and am able to get in to see her when needed in an emergency situation and was able to have a phone consultation today.

It does, however concern me that my son, who has grown up here, and did have a chronic health condition as a child, can't get a doctors appointment. To add to this, his partner who has moved to the region to live with him, has recently had some heart issues but was unable to get a GP appointment in Gulgong or Mudgee,so has to travel the 3 hours back to Tamworth to consult her GP.

My other concern is that our area falls into the Central West Renewable Energy Zone, where there are already several projects under construction or approved, and there are high numbers of temporary workers in the area working on these projects, and there will be even more when the Energy Co Transmission line and Energy Hubs are being constructed. Up until now these workers would have been adding to the strain on our medical services. Now I presume they are also in the position of not being able to get a doctor's appointment if they are sick, which in turn places more strain on the Emergency department at the Hospital and MPS.

Whilst there have been multiple Community Consultations with Energy Co and these issues have been raised, it seems that nothing has been put in place to address the Doctor shortage in our region. Surely if we are to endure the many negatives of the renewable energy constructions in our region, there should be some benefits to the community, particularly by giving incentives for Doctors to come and work in our region. With the amount of money being spent on these projects surely some can be used to address the critical Doctor shortage in Mudgee, Gulgong and Dunedoo.

Thank you.