

**Submission
No 78**

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

Organisation: Royal Far West
Date Received: 1 November 2024



Royal Far West

Children's health, country-wide

Royal Far West's response to NSW Inquiry into the implementation of Portfolio Committee No. 2 recommendations relating to cross-jurisdictional health reform and government consultation with remote, rural and regional communities

November 2024

Terms of reference:

That the Select Committee on Remote, Rural and Regional Health inquire into and report on the progress of and issues relating to the implementation of Portfolio Committee No. 2 recommendations relating to health outcomes and access to health and hospital services, including:

1. Cross-jurisdictional cooperation between the New South Wales and Australian governments, in particular:
 - a. Long-term strategic planning to improve health services and health outcomes in remote, rural and regional areas, including in relation to primary health (including Recommendations 1, 7, 8 and 11)
2. Collaboration between NSW Health and Australian Government bodies on particular initiatives, services or training programs (including Recommendations 9, 10, 14, 21, 22 and 39)
3. NSW Government consultation with health stakeholders and communities in remote, rural and regional New South Wales, in particular:
 - a. Improving communication between communities and health services (including Recommendations 5, 42), and
 - b. Developing place-based health plans (including Recommendation 43)
4. NSW Government action to prioritise the health of regional communities in government decision making (including Recommendations 36, 37 and 44).
5. Any updates or final observations relating to the progress of implementing any Portfolio Committee No. 2 recommendations that the Select Committee has considered in its previous inquiries

Commentary:

As Royal Far West has already made a lengthy submission to this Select Committee, and appeared before the Committee, this submission is brief and focuses specifically on the 3rd Term of Reference regarding NSW Government consultation with health stakeholders and communities in remote, rural and regional NSW.

Recommendation 5 of the "Health outcomes and access to health and hospital services in rural, regional and remote New South Wales" Report is *that NSW Health and the rural and regional Local Health Districts actively engage with local community groups and charities to understand the services and resources they provide, and to ensure that where possible and appropriate, service gaps are filled by government.*

We have three updates to the committee regarding this recommendation.

1. Regional paediatric provider forums:

Over the past two months, Royal Far West has been invited to participate in two service provider forums – one in Western (focusing on Dubbo and surrounding communities), and the other in Murrumbidgee.

The intention of these forums was to bring together organisations providing health care, wellbeing and developmental supports across the relevant regions for children aged 0 – 9 years, recognising the range of organisations that provide services to children in the region and the importance of these services to long term health, wellbeing and developmental outcomes.

The objectives of the forums included:

- Develop a shared understanding of the type, location, and levels of services for children living in the region
- Understand the challenges and opportunities for providers of paediatric services in the region
- Identify opportunities to reduce service duplication and maximise service access,
- Develop agreement on priorities for current and future collaboration.

2. New agreement and refreshed KPIs with NSW Health

Over recent months, Royal Far West has been negotiating with the NSW Health Ministry on our Key Performance Indicators for our renewed contract to deliver the Paediatric Developmental Program to the children and families of regional NSW.

Whilst RFW has always worked closely with the regional LHDs to ensure we were meeting local needs and filling service gaps where possible, this is now a mandatory element of our agreement with Health.

Objective 5 of our Ministerially Approved Grant Agreement is to *Partner with Local Health Districts (LHDs) – to support regional LHDs and local service providers in early identification, assessment and treatment of children and young people in rural and remote NSW who require intervention to optimise their developmental outcomes.* To meet this KPI we have begun undertaking the following activities:

- Consulting with LHDs on specific needs of their local families and providers
- Identifying and facilitate appropriate care pathways in conjunction with LHDs

3. Strengthening relationships with other service providers

As part of RFW's commitment to strengthening our relationships with Local Health Districts and other regional providers, we have offered to host clinicians and staff from other organisations at our Centre for Country Kids in Manly for networking, co-learning and capacity building activities.

Over recent months we have hosted a delegation from Kurrajong Ealy Intervention service from Wagga Wagga, and Marathon Health.

In summary, over the past twelve months, there has been increased collaboration and discussion across child early intervention service providers and NSW Health. This has resulted in greater communication and understanding of gaps and needs in specific locations. Royal Far West also believes this has helped with planning future place-placed based services and possible solutions for workforce shortages in many rural and remote locations.



About Royal Far West

Royal Far West (RFW) is a specialist child development service providing vital supports to improve the health and wellbeing of country children. In December 2024 RFW will turn 100 years old and throughout its history its mission has remained unchanged. Its bold ambition is to ensure every country child has access to the services they need to support their early development and enrich their lives

RFW offers multidisciplinary allied health, mental health and wellbeing services for children up to 12 years of age living in rural and remote Australia. Our team of 150+ trauma-informed, paediatric allied health and medical staff support country children with their developmental health needs, including speech and language delays, behavioural and learning difficulties and mental health needs. Last financial year, we supported over 3,000 country children with complex needs and over 21,000 total beneficiaries including parents, carers, educators and health professionals across three states, 161 schools and 50 early childhood centres in more than 364 rural communities. More information: www.royalfarwest.org.au

Our Services:

Schools and Early Years Services

We partner with schools, early childhood centres and families to support country children's behavioural, mental and developmental health in their own communities so they can belong, learn and grow. Our services are delivered by dedicated multidisciplinary allied health teams virtually and in-person into schools and early childhood centres.

Community Recovery Services

A multidisciplinary and community-based service providing psychosocial support to children and key adults supporting children (parents, carers, teachers and professionals) with recovery, wellbeing and resilience following natural disasters like bushfires, droughts and floods. This service is delivered in-person through schools and early childhood centres in areas affected by natural disasters.

Child and Family Services

A holistic multidisciplinary assessment, referral and treatment service for country children and their families in NSW with complex developmental, mental health and behavioural needs. This is a residential program, based in Manly, with follow-up services provided locally or via telehealth.

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