

16 May 2023

North-West Hospital Masterplan Team

[REDACTED] engagement@corcomms.com.au

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[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Dear North-West Hospital Masterplan Team

CONCERNS FOR REMOTE COMMUNITIES

The North-West Hospitals, in addition to serving those in the urban north, are meant to provide services to Tasmanian's living in the remote West. Currently the hospitals are not supportive of Tasmanians from remote areas, and we believe the draft masterplan does not address this issue.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult for West Coasters to access and use the services at the North-West Hospitals, either in-patient or out-patient, and as a result many simply do not get the medical care they need. For example, there is no effective public transport from the West Coast to the hospital and therefore people must rely on private transport or family and friends, this is problematic when you consider that the West Coast is the most disadvantaged area of the State and has some of the lowest levels of driver license attainment. Further, many people who attend the hospital for emergency reasons are discharged, late at night or early in the morning with no support or transport back to the West Coast, sometimes these people can be waiting hours outside the hospital as they try and arrange friend and family transport. This again encourages people not to seek medical treatment. We have also heard examples of families delaying medical treatment, including out-patient services because of the cost of getting accommodation in Burnie so that they could be close to their vulnerable loved one. Again, this leads to medical treatment being delayed.

To address these issues, we ask that the masterplan include:

1. Dedicated waiting areas for patients from remote areas to use between and before outpatient visits or while waiting for transport once they are discharged. These areas should offer kitchenettes, bathrooms, and sleep recliners.
2. Dedicated accommodation for those accompanying vulnerable patients from remote areas to stay while their loved ones are in hospital. Additionally, this accommodation should be for those that have outpatient services scheduled over multiple days, to avoid excessive and dangerous travel.

Enquiries to: Executive Officer
P: (03) 6471 4700
E: ea@westcoast.tas.gov.au

PO Box 63 Queenstown TAS 7467
11 Sticht Street Queenstown TAS 7467

If these cannot be included in the North-West Masterplan, then there should be consideration of bringing services back to the West Coast where people will access them. Failure to address the barriers to remote patients seeking healthcare will result in places like the West Coast falling further behind in health outcomes.

Yours Sincerely



Shane Pitt

MAYOR

CC: Premier and Minister for Health, Jeremy Rockliff.

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