

21 February 2025

Time to take our hospital back

The Northern Beaches Hospital public private partnership is a failed experiment. Public health and private profit-making are fundamentally incompatible.

Northern Beaches Hospital must now be returned to public hands.

Northern Beaches Hospital is the only remaining public private hospital in NSW. A 2020 state parliamentary inquiry into the Northern Beaches Hospital recommended an end to all public private hospital partnerships – acknowledging they do not work for patients or staff. Five further proposed public private partnership arrangements for regional hospitals were cancelled off the back of this inquiry.

The Northern Beaches community should not be left with this mess. It has to end. Patients' lives are at risk.

I've been calling out operational issues with the Northern Beaches Hospital this entire parliamentary term. I called for the former CEO of the hospital Andrew Newton to resign over the failure to deliver the adolescent mental health beds – he's gone. With local State MP Michael Regan, I demanded that the state government undertake a performance audit of the hospital – something the former State Liberal Government resisted – that is underway, and due to report in June.

But 2-year-old Joe Massa's death is a line in the sand. Patient care is being compromised, Facebook pages are full of heart-breaking testimonials. These are not one-off incidents, they are symptomatic of long term and systemic operational problems.

Since I was elected in 2022, I have also met with a stream of nurses and doctors from the hospital who have catalogued the ongoing and serious cuts to staffing that they have had to endure. Northern Beaches Hospital is the only public hospital in the state that will not adhere to safe nurse to patient staffing ratios. Nurses, doctors and allied health workers have been stretched to the limit and placed in chronically unsafe working conditions. They are burning out and leaving in droves.

These brave whistleblowers have put their own careers on the line for the safety of their patients, and for the wellbeing of the hospital workforce. The situation must no longer be tolerated.

My community deserves a public hospital it can rely on; a public hospital that is safe. The health staff also deserve a safe working environment.

This mess was created by the Liberal Party, but it is for the State and Federal Labor governments to fix. They must step in urgently to ensure the hospital is put back in public hands. Public hospitals must be publicly run to serve our community, not to make profits for corporations.