



REGIONAL HEALTHCARE POLICY



WHAT WE BELIEVE

Where you live should never determine how long you live.

Yet across regional New South Wales, families are being forced to accept longer waiting times, fewer services, workforce shortages and poorer access to healthcare simply because they live outside Sydney.

Country people pay their taxes, raise their families and build the industries that keep this state running, but when it comes to healthcare they are too often treated as second-class citizens.

Regional hospitals are struggling to recruit staff, maintain services and keep up with growing demand. Communities are being asked to travel hundreds of kilometres for treatment while local services are downgraded, centralised or quietly stripped away.

Too many healthcare decisions are being made by bureaucrats sitting in Sydney offices who have never had to drive three hours to an emergency department, wait months for a specialist appointment or worry about whether their local hospital will still be open next year.

Regional communities do not want special treatment. They want fair treatment. We believe every person, regardless of postcode, deserves timely access to quality healthcare close to home.

We believe regional hospitals should be strengthened, not downgraded.

Frontline health workers should be supported, not buried in paperwork. Local communities should have a real say in the services they rely on.

Most importantly, we believe regional people deserve the same standard of healthcare available anywhere else in New South Wales.



OUR ACTION PLAN

- Launch a Regional Healthcare Workforce Package to attract doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health professionals into regional and rural communities.
- Expand housing assistance, relocation grants and retention incentives to help regional health services recruit and keep skilled staff.
- Rebuild the regional healthcare workforce pipeline through expanded scholarships, bonded placements, apprenticeships and rural training pathways linked to regional service.
- Increase support for rural medical schools, regional clinical placements and country-based specialist training programs.
- Put more healthcare professionals into country communities by creating incentives for long-term regional practice rather than short-term rotations.
- Stop the closure, downgrading and centralisation of regional hospital services that force patients to travel further for care.
- Conduct a statewide audit of regional healthcare services to identify staffing shortages, service gaps and infrastructure deficiencies.
- Restore essential hospital services that have been stripped from regional communities over recent decades.
- Replace outdated Multipurpose Services with fully functioning hospitals capable of meeting the needs of growing regional populations.
- Establish a dedicated Regional Hospital Infrastructure Fund to upgrade ageing facilities, modernise equipment and expand clinical capacity.
- Fix the growing maintenance backlog across regional health facilities by prioritising frontline infrastructure upgrades.
- Put local communities back into healthcare decision-making by strengthening



local health advisory committees and community consultation processes.

- Require genuine community consultation before any major changes to hospital services, staffing levels or healthcare delivery models.
- Force transparency onto NSW Health by publicly reporting staffing shortages, service reductions, waiting times and regional funding allocations.
- Strengthen independent oversight of regional health administration to ensure decisions are driven by patient outcomes rather than bureaucracy.
- Expand mental health services across regional NSW with additional clinicians, outreach programs and crisis support services.
- Increase specialist outreach services so country patients can access more treatment closer to home.
- Expand telehealth where it improves access to healthcare but prevent it from becoming a substitute for essential face-to-face services.
- Remove non-emergency patient transport responsibilities from paramedics so they can focus on frontline emergency care.
- Increase funding for aeromedical services, emergency retrieval capability and regional aviation infrastructure.
- Expand mobile healthcare and outreach services into smaller rural and remote communities.
- Reform the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) to better reflect the true cost of accessing treatment.
- Increase travel and accommodation support for patients and families forced to travel long distances for specialist care.



OUR ACTION PLAN - Continued

- Expand affordable accommodation options near major treatment centres for country patients and their carers.
- Remove barriers that prevent regional patients from accessing specialist treatment and advanced healthcare services.
- Support safe staffing levels across regional hospitals, ambulance services and healthcare facilities.
- Cut unnecessary bureaucracy and administrative burdens that take doctors, nurses and health workers away from patient care.
- Strengthen workplace safety, wellbeing and mental health support programs for frontline healthcare workers.
- Crack down on bullying, harassment and toxic workplace culture within NSW Health through stronger accountability measures and independent reporting pathways.
- Guarantee that healthcare funding reaches frontline services, hospital beds, medical equipment and patient care rather than being absorbed by growing layers of administration.
- Deliver a fair share of health funding to regional New South Wales so country communities receive the services, staff and infrastructure they deserve.
- Put patients before bureaucracy and ensure regional healthcare is built around the needs of local communities, not the convenience of Sydney administrators.