

I object to the proposed hospital at Frenchs Forest on several grounds;

1. Location.

a) Frenchs Forest is not truly part of the Northern Beaches so to call this new proposed hospital The Northern Beaches Hospital is dishonest and misleading. Frenchs Forest is closer to Chatswood and RNSH than to either of the existing hospitals at Mona Vale and Manly.

b) Warringah Rd is probably the busiest and most congested road in the entire area and its intersection with Wakehurst Parkway creates massive traffic cues during extended peak periods. The nearby intersection of Warringah Rd and Forest Way is also a major source of congestion. Wakehurst Parkway, which would be the primary access route for most Northern Beaches residents, is the most notorious single lane road in the region and closes due to flooding as soon as any significant rainfall occurs. It is also a bushfire prone area. Governments have been reluctant to embark on the reconstruction work that would be required transform this long and winding ground level road into a safe, all weather 4-lane dual carriageway. The traffic volume and regional significance at the intersection of Warringah Road and Wakehurst Parkway easily justifies the construction of an overpass and/or tunnel with side entries/exits to create a safe and effective intersection. This is standard practice in parts of Western Sydney but it seems that the funds are not available for such a basic piece of infrastructure. It is essential that any proposed development at this site should not encroach in any way on the footprint of a redesigned intersection, which will be built one day.

2. The voice of the people (“democracy”)

I have been personally involved in the collection of over 10,000 signatures for a petition demanding that the hospital at Mona Vale be maintained and further developed to fully service the needs of Northern Beaches residents. From numerous personal interactions with residents along the entire Northern Beaches and beyond I can state unequivocally that over 98% of people assume that MVDH will always exist as their local hospital and are horrified at the suggestion that MVDH will be downgraded in favour of a new hospital at Frenchs Forest. Over 10,000 signatures is much more than a straw poll of the Pittwater electorate. A similar situation exists for the Manly electorate and the Warringah electorate is sandwiched between these two, giving a total constituency of approximately 250,000 people.

3. The existing hospitals

Mona Vale and Manly hospitals have served the Northern Beaches community for around 50 and 100 years respectively. They are now old and substandard in many ways due to chronic underfunding. Both of these hospitals are ideally and strategically placed to meet the needs of the unique-in-the-world Northern Beaches. The existing Mona Vale Hospital is perfect for a staged redevelopment that would allow continued operation of critical functions (Emergencies etc.) whilst new wings are under construction. The site is acknowledged as the perfect hospital

site and offers the healing environment that only a coastal location can provide. Mona Vale Hospital can be completely redeveloped and upgraded without any significant additional infrastructure costs, in contrast with the Frenchs Forest site, with its massive incumbent and unbudgeted infrastructure redevelopment overhead.

4. What the voters want vs what the politicians tell them they are going to get, i.e., “community consultation”.

The overwhelming majority of the Northern Beaches residents want the existing hospitals to be rebuilt/upgraded to 21st century standards at their existing locations. State government politicians, notably Barry O’Farrell in 2004 wrote that the liberals would never support the one new hospital, earmarked by Labour at the time, to replace Mona Vale or Manly Hospitals. The people have not changed their views on this, in fact with the vastly expanding housing developments in the Warriewood Valley, the argument becomes even stronger in favour of redevelopment at the Mona Vale site. However, the politicians/developers are hell bent on proceeding with a hospital at Frenchs Forest against the will of the people. Why is this???

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