

Dunedoo  
2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020

Our Dear Mayor & Councilors

Our Medical Health situation in Dunedoo is practically the same as stated in the article from Warren Bull in the Dunedoo Diary in August. Apparently Coolah is virtually the same now.

I feel I cannot mention all the problems we encounter here.

Would the council feel fit to call a public meeting in Dunedoo.

Thanking for listening.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ken Westerman".

Ken Westerman

# Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

## DOCTOR CRISIS DUNEDOO

I write respecting the critical and widely held concerns at Dunedoo regarding the failure of the Health System to ensure an appropriate and assured availability of Medical Practitioners here.

Those concerns arose and have been held for some months. The situation has worsened. It would not appear the concerns are being addressed or reversed. Community concerns and lack of confidence in the failed system has never been higher and is quite shameful.

It is proper to first look at the recent events and history of GP's here.

Dr Hopwood provided stability and assurance to his patients for some 24 years from his Digilah Street surgery.

Meantime, the then incumbent GP in situ with Western Health practised from and serviced the Multipurpose Service (Hospital). Some three years past that arrangements were terminated. Western Health in a blaze of publicity and good intent told us all that Centre would continue to be serviced on a permanent ongoing basis, therefore at that time allaying the concerns of this community. History has shown this has not occurred. It was originally intended and indeed evolved that a Locum GP would service the Centre for varying periods determined by availability and willingness. Not surprisingly that undertaking has broken down in recent times, to the degree it is non-existent and consider if you will the additional demands and stress it surely places on an otherwise most competent nursing staff. It is not right or proper for staff to be regularly exposed in the absence of a GP. In my view the catalyst of our problems is in the failure of Western Health to maintain a GP at the MPS. The system is dysfunctional and a "Mish Mash" of GP's.

It fails to establish a relationship and liaison which brings assurance and increased familiarity providing a fundamental right and expectation to have access to a GP.

What we have is mediocrity. It has become the accepted norm. The problem you walk past is the one which remains. Our community can get what they seek through endeavour and motivation. We must not accept mediocrity but rather strive to ensure we receive a standard of constant medical services which is our right and equal to that elsewhere.

We are after all a modern age Country, one of the most dynamic, smartest and wealthiest democracies in the world. At least, that is what we are told.

Yet something as crucial as the presence and retention of a GP in a highly viable long-established country location of some 1500 residents overall is not happening. That despite the previous assurance and undertaking that a GP would be available at the MPS. Western Health and the Minister of Health has miserably failed us.

It is interesting to reflect that the first GP at Dunedoo practised from 1910. A further 19 have done so since meaning a stay on average of some 5 and a half years. If only that could happen today.

I have refrained from comment respecting the

private practise in Wargundy Street. The perception exists the service from there has been less than ideal. It is highly irregular with a heavy recent emphasis on "drop in" GP's. Here today, gone tomorrow, wish varying hours and days of operations. It is hardly engenders confidence. Then it has been further comprised by the absence for good personal reason of the local female GP.

It is interesting that for a considerable period now Coolah has 3 GP's. One in private practice in Binnia Street and two at the hospital. What are we doing wrong? Recently many accounts have filtered of long-time citizens who have contributed much being required to be hospitalised or receive treatment at adjacent facilities when ordinarily they would have remained here had a GP been available. It seems we have an ageing population, greater needs and fewer options.

How do you feel about sleeping tonight in the knowledge we do not have a GP here sharing the same experience?

So, what is the solution? The local Health Advisory Council seemingly has questions to answer. What are they presiding over? A shambolic situation. Do they share the concerns of this community or are they oblivious to it?

Are they complicit with Western Health administration? What endeavours or overtures have they made recently to address a glaring issue? What communication have they provided to this community?

Then we move to Mr Roy Butler, MLA, Local Member for Barwon since 18th March. A massive geographical electorate embracing many disadvantaged centres west of the Newell Highway. Various of those centres have traditionally over the years' experienced grave problems in adequately providing GP's and health workers. That problem is not only common to Health, Mr Butler surely has a position where he can confront and have the ear of the Minister.

On the 6th of June 2019, I had a lengthy telephone conversation with the MLA's Secretary out of his Narrabri office. I expounded my views re Health issues here. Some weeks later, she advised me he was taking the issues to the Health Minister, further, I would be advised in writing, I have had no further contact.

I reason Mr Butler may be at the crossroads. Has he been properly briefed? Does he share the concerns of this community? If so, what is he doing about it? One wonders if he had a goal of achievements when he came to Office. If so, none could have been so noble as to ensure those centres in his electorate crying out for the permanent placement of GP's were so provided. Imagine the impetus he would gain.

I have views regarding incentives such as increased financial support and community consultative forums (in certain defined clusters), the latter supported by say Mr Butler in an ex-officio role. More about that another time perhaps as space may be an issue.

I would hope many may share my concerns. I believe we have to move forward; nothing comes from nothing. If you care to contact me even if you have an alternative view. Please do so on 0473 087104. This is serious business.

Warren Bull

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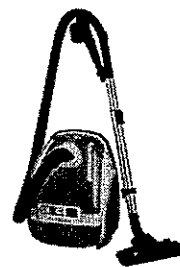
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