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Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
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Sunday 27th August 2017

To whom it may concern,

RE: Availability and accessibility of diagnostic imaging equipment around Australia

I'm just adding a few comments in regards to Availability and accessibility of diagnostic imaging equipment around Australia as requested.

In this particular case I am commenting on the facilities available on Norfolk Island.

Firstly I would like to thank those responsible for purchasing and providing state-of-the art technology and facilities in terms of x-rays and mammography located at the Norfolk Island Health and Residential Aged Care Service (NIHRACS).

It was much needed by the community and much appreciated.

I just have a few questions or comments in regards to this.

- Why are the pieces of equipment purchased from different companies/manufacturers? It is a great challenge to get service engineers and maintenance people to come to Norfolk Island because of flight schedules, or rather lack of daily flights from Australian mainland, New Zealand or anywhere else. It would have saved considerable costs to have all equipment from one company

and thereby have them all serviced as required at the one time by the one company.

- Next I have a few questions about staffing. It took a long time for staffing to be found for someone to run the mammography machine. I recall a conversation from a senior Engineer working with the Department for Infrastructure and Regional Development saying he was concerned that the warranty period had commenced from the date the equipment was commissioned and authorised to use yet no suitably qualified staff were available to operate the equipment, nor were they planning to advertise or look for some time after. As fate would have it an almost retired sonographer was found at a dinner party, who was able to come and do some short stints.
- Likewise the current Radiologist is restricted on what they can do. Prior to full Australian take over they were performing ultrasounds and other imaging, but after things changed over to Australian standards I believe they were told they could not perform this because the formal qualifications were not there on paper. Now I am wondering why this issue was not addressed? Surely there are a number of options such as a Grandfather clause because of expertise in area, or upskilling the staff member to obtain correct qualifications quickly or is it an issue of money and salary, whereby this person is not offered additional salary to perform additional tasks. It is all quite confusing.
- So because of staffing certain diagnostic imaging cannot be performed on the island and therefore patients must fly out to Sydney, Brisbane or elsewhere on mainland Australia to have these tests performed. Whilst they are able to obtain some refunds for airfare costs, they are out of pocket for other expenses such as accommodation, and loss of income from their regular employment etc.
- We still have a scenario where pregnant women must go off island to have antenatal imaging performed. It is hard enough they have to leave the island at 36 weeks and deliver their child off island, but to then have to go have ultrasounds during the pregnancy done off island is more inconvenience and out-of-pocket costs.

At least in the case of Diagnostic Imaging the order whilst inconvenient has been done in the correct way i.e. get the department and facilities available and set-up then work out the staffing (hopefully). Compare that with Pathology at the same site and they have done the reverse and it is a messy scenario.

Anyway thank you for taking the time to read my comments and that of others.

I am happy to provide further information is required. I look forward to your findings and report. Thank you

Yours Sincerely,

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