



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT AM, FAHMS, FRSN, MD, MPHIL, MBBS, FRACP, FRCP, FRCPCH
Professor, Discipline of Child and Adolescent Health
University of Sydney
Consultant Paediatrician
The Children's Hospital at Westmead
Director, Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit
NHMRC Practitioner Fellow

Tel: 612 9845-3450 (Direct)
Tel: 612 9845 3448 (Secretary)
Fax: 612 9845-3389
Email: elizabeth.elliott@health.nsw.gov.au
Provider No: 968351A

9th November 2020

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am writing to you in my role as a Director and Clinical Specialist on the Royal Far West Board. I write with the endorsement of our Chair, in support of Royal Far West's plan to develop a health and well-being campus adjacent to the Centre for Country Kids in Manly.

Royal Far West is a 95-year old charity based in Manly that is dedicated to improving health outcomes for children in rural and remote communities. We provide integrated health, education, and disability services for children with developmental vulnerability and disability, together with capacity building and support for families, schools, and health professionals. These services and supports are provided at our Centre for Country Kids in Manly, using technology (telehealth) and through community outreach programs.

Our Manly location is central to the model and is where we provide our most complex children and families with specialist services, support, and respite. Our large, multi-disciplinary team of 90+ clinicians works with the Royal Far West School (part of the NSW Department of Education) to support children and their parents/carers in the Centre for Country Kids. Families are accommodated onsite in our Drummond House guesthouse.

Developmental vulnerability and the need for associated services and supports, is increasing across rural and remote communities. In particular, mental health and behavioural issues are rising, due to factors such as drought, bushfires and COVID-19. This has been reflected in year on year growth in the number of families seeking services from Royal Far West. The number of children we work with has tripled over the last decade, and this year, we will support close to 10,000 people through our programs.

Building the new Centre of Country for Kids has been critical in enabling Royal Far West to respond to increasing demand, and to provide services in a more contemporary way, thereby enhancing the experience of our families and staff. However, the building is already close to capacity and is short on contemporary therapy spaces, consultation rooms, school rooms and appropriate meeting spaces.

In addition, our traditional Drummond House guesthouse, which is adjacent to the Centre for Country Kids, is outdated and no longer 'fit for purpose'. The bedrooms, dining areas, communal and play areas – essentially all aspects of the existing guesthouse – no longer meet the needs of our families with complex health, psychological and emotional needs. The available play areas are small and are not

the
children's
hospital at Westmead



Part of the Sydney Children's
Hospitals Network

Corner Hawkesbury Road
and Hainsworth Street

Locked Bag 4001
Westmead NSW 2145
Sydney Australia

DX 8213 Parramatta

Tel +61 2 9845 0000

Fax +61 2 9845 3489

www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au

ABN 53 188 579 090

purpose built, which makes it challenging for children to play safely and regulate themselves and for parents/carers and/or staff to supervise.

The dining area is dark and extremely noisy. Many families struggle to manage at eating times, especially where children have specific needs (for example, children with autism). The bedroom and bathrooms have very little natural light, are poorly ventilated, overlook each other and are space inefficient. The single lift regularly breaks down and is not large enough to fit a stretcher. The mechanical infrastructure overall is basic and inefficient from any energy perspective.

Due to the way the building is configured, there is very little opportunity for passive surveillance of children by parents/carers or staff, which is critical in monitoring behaviour and anxiety levels and managing specific risks like 'climbers', 'runners' or 'jumpers', which are common amongst our clients. This makes the building most inefficient from an operational and staffing perspective. Finally, the fit-out of the building is very old and the whole guesthouse needs refurbishing, alongside addressing these fundamental layout issues.

The health and well-being campus that Royal Far West is proposing is vital to delivering on our mission and strategy, reaching more rural and children and families with integrated services that significantly improve health and well-being outcomes in an environment that is safe, welcoming and easy to navigate.

The proposed campus design is based on considerable consultation with our clinical, school, recreation and accommodation staff with respect to the needs of our children and families and the services we are seeking to provide, now and in the future. The new design will provide a safe, secure environment that is comfortable, secure and supportive for families, with generous play spaces, visual and acoustic security, and responds to the particular risk factors associated with our client population (for example, tendencies to climb, heightened anxiety). It also will provide additional space and flexibility in how we work with families. Together, this will allow us to better support more families and further enhance the health and well-being of our country children and their carers.

I hope this letter provides you with some insight into the importance of the proposed campus and specifically the redesign of Drummond House, towards realising our vision and mission. Please do not hesitate to contact me at elizabeth.elliott@health.nsw.gov.au if you require further information.

Yours sincerely,



PROFESSOR ELIZABETH ELLIOTT
PROFESSOR OF PAEDIATRICS AND CHILD HEALTH
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
CONSULTANT PAEDIATRICIAN, CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL WESTMEAD