



PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SIXTH PARLIAMENT

Private Members' Statements

20 November 2018

JOHN HUNTER HOSPITAL

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) (13:06):

In September 2015 the successful and well used John Hunter Hospital park-and-ride shuttle bus service was cancelled—yet another victim of this Government's cuts. In its place are more than 700 new car park spaces and the outcome is that an already congested road network was forced into a complete standstill as a result of 4,000 more car movements each day being on a single lane inbound and single lane outbound road network. Patients and visitors, some with mobility issues, were forced to walk much further to the hospital, whereas the shuttle service delivered them to the front door.

In 2017 the Government announced it would not construct a full interchange as part of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass stage five at the back of the John Hunter Hospital. A complete interchange would alleviate traffic congestion by providing a second exit. Thankfully, this year, after a public campaign, the Government listened to staff and visitors and agreed to construct a full interchange and second exit from the hospital. Earlier this year changes were made to the Newcastle public transport network by Keolis Downer and the Government. The changes have resulted in many more people being forced into their cars to get to the John Hunter Hospital, which is adding congestion in and out of the already busy hospital.

Despite hundreds of letters, 22,000 signed petitions and thousands of surveys, not a single change was made to make it easier for Hunter residents to get to the hospital. As a result of all the changes, traffic jams now are commonplace. At least three times a week staff and visitors are caught up in a major traffic jam when they are exiting the hospital. Often the delays are more than 30 minutes. That is unacceptable, not just for visitors who are exiting the hospital but also for staff who are working very long hours and who then face frustrating delays leaving their workplace. Need I remind the Government that staff are people with families—children to pick up from school, appointments to keep and social lives to enjoy.

This July internal roadworks were undertaken to improve the road condition and traffic flow around the hospital. The works were a complete failure. Staff and visitors still face lengthy waits when exiting the hospital. Last week my office was again flooded with calls from staff and patients from the hospital. Traffic had again come to a standstill. No cars could get into

the hospital; no cars could get out. Staff and patients were stuck in their cars inside the car parks, unable to move for more than an hour. Patients and visitors who called my office were upset. Some had waited months, if not years, for appointments at the hospital. As a result of the chaotic traffic, some of them will have to wait even longer for their appointments. Staff missed appointments and missed picking up their children from school and child care. All of this comes at a cost, including a significant impact on the budgets of the hardworking staff of the hospital.

My concern and the concern of staff, particularly the paramedics, is that there will be a major incident when the gridlock stops emergency vehicles getting in or out of the hospital. It puts lives at risk. This is unacceptable. There is a simple solution to help ease some of the traffic gridlock and it has been staring the Government in the face. The Government must reinstate the park and ride facility and reduce the number of cars entering the hospital. The central business district park and ride service at Hunter Stadium has been successful. Let us emulate that. The Government loves to spruik about its record of listening and consulting with the people of the Hunter. Dozens of staff members and patients have contacted me about this; I am sure thousands more have plenty to say about it. This is a perfect opportunity for the Government to listen.