

18th November 2020

Dear Sir/ Madam

I am writing to you in my capacity as a mother of a child who attends and receives the unique services of Royal Far West and we live more than 500km from Manly. I am also a Non-Executive Director on the Royal Far West Board and in my professional life, I am the Chief Executive of Health Infrastructure, the organisation within NSW Health which is responsible for the planning and delivery of NSW Government's \$20billion health capital works portfolio across NSW.

I have a great interest and personal investment in the quality of the facilities that RFW uses to support and empower vulnerable families across rural NSW and write to you to provide you my insights. I am supportive of Royal Far West's plan to re-develop the Drummond House guesthouse adjacent to the recently completed stage 1 Centre for Country Kids.

My family has been privileged to enjoy the incredibly valuable health, education and social care services that Royal Far West has offered us. RFW provides integrated accommodation and professional health and wellbeing services for children with developmental vulnerability and disability, together with capacity building and support for families, schools, and health professionals.

The location of the charity in Manly is pivotal to the wellbeing, resilience, respite and recovery model that has supported my child so well, and we appreciate the restorative location as part of our therapy. Whilst only one of my children is part of the RFW program the whole family stays on site as RFW is inclusive. However, the campus also demands that certain essential elements are in place to keep the vulnerable young clients and their families safe and secure. The guest-house accommodation and its therapeutic recreation services are a vital part of the psycho-social, communication and language treatment regimes that are part of our therapy plan. Put simply, it's the whole package which makes the Royal Far West experience work for families.

I wanted therefore, to highlight some very important features relating to the 85 year old guesthouse "Drummond House", from my perspective as a mother and consumer of the service who also has deep technical knowledge and experience in property to assist you in your deliberations of the Royal Far West's application.

When we stay at Drummond House, it is for one week at a time. This is our home away from home and an important place for my children to feel comfortable, at ease and safe. While we are deeply appreciative of the accommodation service, the age, layout and condition of Drummond House facilities can cause stress and fatigue. From a planning perspective, I see so many opportunities to improve the health and hygiene of this important amenity, to make it more calming, receptive, well ventilated, up to date and fit for purpose. This will improve timely wellbeing outcomes for all Royal Far West families.

Over the past 12 months I have contributed to the RFW planning team as a guesthouse user/ consumer, on many aspects of the current design that sits before you, to vastly improve the amenity within Drummond House and bring it up to an acceptable standard. The team has looked to see if they could renovate the interior of the building only to make it more functional and maintain the existing shell. Unfortunately, this does not work as they are unable to create contemporary, functional spaces and critical play areas within the existing envelope. The existing envelope heavily compromises the flexibility of any design and the core purpose of Drummond House is to create a sanctuary for the families. Numerous additions have been made to Drummond House over the years and I am delighted to see the latest design, which will allow families to flourish and feel safe and secure. This is the fundamental purpose of the RFW guesthouse.

To highlight a few of the current key issues and shortfalls:

- The reception area is not private and does not support anxious dysregulated children and exhausted parents who may have travelled 10 hours by car or train/ferry from rural NSW to access RFW;
- The cooking smells from the small dining room permeate all parts of the building and can be over bearing and distracting at times. It can also be extremely noisy, which is a really big problem for some children with anxiety, conduct and disability disorders. This is the case for both the family having an issue in the moment and other families who are in the dining area at the time;
- There are very few targeted quiet areas throughout Drummond House where parents / carers and clients can rest and recover between treatments. Realistically, this may be for half a day between appointments or for half an hour depending on consultation and therapy schedules across a week's stay.
- The motel style rooms are old, in relatively poor condition, poorly ventilated with little natural light and do not comply with contemporary accommodation guidelines for healthcare support facilities;
- There is a need for cleverly designed external access, circulation and spaces to provide sensory gardens and meeting areas that reinforce (rather than detract from) the therapeutic benefits of the service
- The current garden area for clients is publicly exposed to the local community walking by. This lack of privacy can be quite distressing for some families
- The mechanical and service assets in the building are at the end of their life, at times inoperable and not conducive to a relaxed experience (for example the old hydraulic lift frequently breaks down).

The proposed campus design has been developed after extensive consultation over many months with RFW's clinical, recreation and accommodation staff, the RFW School staff and local community leaders and residents. This charity plays such an important role in the lives of thousands of disadvantaged and vulnerable rural families and we all deserve to be supported in the best possible way. We need to be safe, secure and protected. We need inspiring, restful and functional spaces to promote superior wellbeing outcomes.

I trust this letter is helpful in illustrating why I, as a country parent, am so committed to this new design that is proposed by the Royal Far West. I write to you as an appreciative mother and consumer of RFW services, a subject matter expert in the delivery of health and ambulatory care services, a leader of an important NSW government health organisation, and a proud and committed member of the Board of Royal Far West. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide you with any further information or my perspective.

Yours sincerely



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Qualifications

Bachelor of Landscape Architecture

Masters of Project Management

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