

Consultation Report

September 2024

Introduction

The Western NSW Local Health District (WNSWLHD) is committed to extensive consultation with neighbouring residents, the broader Dubbo Community, healthcare professionals and key stakeholders throughout the design and development approval process for the proposed Dubbo Residential Rehabilitation Centre.

Between March and July 2024, the District held a range of face-to-face and online webinar consultation sessions to; identify the key steps in design and development process, promote a better understanding of residential rehabilitation, exhibit the Centre's concept designs and provide detail on the facility's architectural plans on-site.

Phase 1 of consultation activity was held in March as open forum information sessions featuring presentations by WNSWLHD Chief Executive Mark Spittal and Director of Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Helen McFarlane. Mr Spittal and Ms McFarlane were joined by guest presenters Norm Henderson, Senior Alcohol and Other Drug Worker, and David Kelly, Executive Director of Programs Odyssey House NSW.

Phase 2 of consultation activity was held in June to reveal, outline and display concept designs in pop-up exhibitions and through guided community site tours, led by head architect John Ward from Fulton Trotter Architects.

Additionally, extensive events were held throughout the consultation period for key Aboriginal stakeholders and the Aboriginal community, including dedicated information sessions, pop-up design exhibitions and Connecting with Country workshops.

During consultation sessions a range of feedback was received, across a number of key themes which are outlined below. These key themes were generally consistent across the two phases of consultation.

This information has been valuable feedback to the WNSWLHD Project Team to help inform decision-making regarding the design and operation of the Centre, and in preparing the project's Development Application (DA).

The final phase of community consultation will notify the community of DA lodgement in August 2024, and public exhibition.

Consultation summary and responses

What we heard	WNSWLHD response
The site – suitability, identification, selection and location	
<p>Concerns have been raised by the community regarding the site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How and why was this site selected? • Why was it chosen over other sites? • Why is this site considered suitable? 	<p>We investigated more than 40 potential locations held in both public and private ownership. More detailed investigations were done on several sites, but they ultimately provided to be either unsuitable or unavailable.</p> <p>The site on Spears Drive meets all the necessary requirements for the Centre. It has the size and capacity to accommodate the Centre, with the residential, treatment and recreational facilities it should have on-site. It is also in close proximity to other health services and to important community amenities.</p> <p>The site is development-ready in terms of basic infrastructure and services. It has R1 – General Residential zoning and does not need re-zoning or re-designations, which could cause further delay.</p> <p>The site and WNSWLHD’s selection process have been internally and independently reviewed in conjunction with the Ministry of Health.</p>
<p>Why is a residential site more suitable than another location, for example a rural setting?</p>	<p>It is not uncommon for residential rehabilitation services to be a part of a community.</p> <p>This is because every person who goes through rehabilitation needs to continue to feel like they are part of a community, and to be supported by their healthcare team to live and function successfully in the community.</p> <p>Having the Centre in a residential neighbourhood provides a connection to community and family while residents undergo rehabilitation. This can help support their journey back into the community.</p>
<p>What engagement has been undertaken with the Aboriginal community – is the site culturally appropriate?</p>	<p>Following identification of the site, we consulted with the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) in Dubbo in line with our procurement processes.</p> <p>This consultation included undertaking a cultural site survey, which is a formal review to determine if a site was culturally appropriate to develop the Centre on.</p>

	<p>In the first and second phases of consultation activity, we have undertaken a range of dedicated events with key Aboriginal stakeholders and the broader Aboriginal community.</p> <p>These have included Connecting with Country design workshops, a Walk on Country event and Smoking Ceremony, along with information sessions and consultation planning activities.</p> <p>We are committed to continuing extensive consultation with the Dubbo LALC and the broader Aboriginal community, including a designing-on-Country process.</p> <p>This will ensure Aboriginal history is recognised and respected throughout the development process, and the facility and services are culturally safe and appropriate.</p>
<p>What consultation occurred with the community prior to the site being selected and procured?</p>	<p>Like any development – commercial, residential, or utility, such as a health service – the normal process is to first acquire a site which potentially meets the needs of the project.</p> <p>Work then starts on the development process which includes consulting and providing information to key groups, including neighbours. Those groups are then able to formally provide support or objections through the DA process.</p> <p>For this project, we have followed that process. There were assessments of the Spears Drive site to make sure it was appropriate for a development of this type before it was acquired.</p> <p>We then started a consultation process with the neighbourhood, the broader community and other healthcare and social service providers.</p> <p>Through this consultation process, we have made as much information as possible available, listened, and looked at where we can incorporate suggestions into the design of the Centre to help reduce any concerns.</p> <p>Any member of the public is able to make a submission about the project when the DA goes on public exhibition by the Dubbo Regional Council.</p>
<p>The Government was offered the 11R Wellington Road parcel of land for free. Why was this land refused?</p>	<p>Before the District acquired the Spears Drive site we had worked with a number of landholders to seek out possible locations.</p> <p>This site was not put forward until after the District had acquired the Spears Drive site, which was assessed as being suitable for a development of this type.</p> <p>By this time, the project had already undergone substantial delays since funding was first extended to Dubbo Regional Council in</p>

	<p>2019. This is an important service for western NSW, and it was appropriate to move forward.</p>
<p>Can the community access information relating to the selection and procurement of this site?</p>	<p>When a Government agency, like the Local Health District, acquires or disposes of land it has to follow strict processes to make sure public funds are used appropriately.</p> <p>These processes, which are commercial-in-confidence, were followed in the acquisition of the Spears Drive site and advice was provided to the Ministry of Health throughout the site selection and acquisition process.</p> <p>Any information related to the Centre's development which is required to be part of the DA for public exhibition will be included in public documentation.</p>
<p>Are there examples of other similar-sized rehabilitation centres which are located in residential neighbourhoods?</p>	<p>There are 24 publicly-funded residential rehabilitation facilities in NSW which are operated by non-government providers. Many offer withdrawal management (detox) on site.</p> <p>The specific locations of these services are typically not made public for privacy and safety.</p> <p>There are five services of a similar size to the planned Centre in Dubbo which offer withdrawal management, more than half of which are located in established residential neighbourhoods.</p> <p>The majority of all publicly-funded residential rehabilitation centres in NSW are located in established neighbourhoods and surrounded by residential properties, including those which are in close proximity to hospitals.</p>

Construction and design	
<p>How long will the Centre take to build?</p>	<p>No construction will occur without development consent. We expect assessment of the Development Application to take several months.</p> <p>Pending development approval, we anticipate construction beginning in early 2025 with an approximate build period of 12 months.</p>
<p>How will you manage construction activity like trades, additional traffic and access for large vehicles?</p>	<p>The successful building contractor will be responsible for developing traffic management plans in line with relevant development consent conditions. This plan will include traffic management, access routes and pathways.</p> <p>The successful contractor will also be responsible for implementing and managing a Construction Environmental Management Plan, including dust, debris, sediment control and waste management. This plan will include strategies on how we will maintain the site</p>

	<p>and ensure it and the surrounding areas are kept safe and clean during construction.</p> <p>To minimise disruption and potential congestion on neighbourhood roads, we hope to allow trades and contractors to park on the site itself during construction.</p>
<p>How will you manage access to the site short-term and during construction – is there an alternative access point?</p>	<p>The North West Urban Release Area development plan includes a proposal for a new road off Narromine Road.</p> <p>We are talking with Dubbo Regional Council about whether a temporary access route could be provided off Narromine Road, for use until the permanent road is developed.</p> <p>If this is possible, we will utilise a temporary access road during construction to ensure any additional traffic created does not affect neighbouring residents. We will also look at whether if this road could be used as the main access point for the Centre long-term.</p> <p>If this is not possible, access to the site will be maintained through Spears Drive, at least until the new public thoroughfare is constructed.</p>
<p>Will there be any through-site access for the community for activities like dog-walking, as an example?</p>	<p>During construction of the Centre, typical of any development areas where work is being undertaken, the site will not be accessible to the general community to ensure their safety and wellbeing.</p> <p>A Non-Government Organisation (NGO) will operate the service, which will include managing any potential through-site access which may be available after the Centre is established.</p> <p>These considerations will be made in line with requirements to ensure and maintain privacy for both future residents and the surrounding neighbourhood.</p>
<p>Will the Centre be gated off from the adjacent streets for security?</p>	<p>Entering a residential rehabilitation program is voluntary so while the Centre will be secure, it will be non-custodial and not locked down or gated.</p> <p>The Centre's initial landscaping and any fencing requirements have been considered as part of the design process, with a focus on privacy for residents and for neighbours.</p> <p>These plans will be provided in full as part of the supporting documentation included in the DA.</p>
<p>Will the Centre's design be environmentally friendly and consider extreme weather?</p>	<p>Along with relevant guidelines for development of this type of facility, we have followed NSW Health's design principles which align with the Net Zero Roadmap.</p>

<p>How important is landscaping and maintenance?</p> <p>Can it include mature trees for privacy or vegetable gardens for use in therapy programs?</p> <p>How are you selecting trees and what species will be used?</p>	<p>Landscaping is critical to this project and we want to make sure the site is private, in keeping with the look and feel of the neighbourhood, is well-maintained, and offers recreational and therapeutic benefits to residents.</p> <p>The selection of trees and plants used in landscaping has a focus of using low maintenance and native species where possible, which complement the existing neighbourhood and green space.</p> <p>A key aspect of Connecting with Country workshops was plant species and in line with this consultation, some culturally-significant species from outside the area will be included.</p> <p>Landscaping has been designed to be sympathetic with the existing neighbourhood and assist in ensuring privacy of future residents and neighbouring homes.</p>
<p>How does the design of the facility ensure it fits into the existing neighbourhood?</p>	<p>The Centre has been designed to be sympathetic to the neighbourhood and to fit into the existing streetscape, including aspects like height and construction materials.</p> <p>The Centre will be single-story with a maximum height consistent with other residences in the neighbourhood and has been designed to be residential in character and resemblance, although its footprint will be larger than a typical home.</p> <p>The materials planned for use in construction, like cladding for example, will be consistent with existing residences in the neighbourhood and so too the Centre's colour scheme.</p> <p>Connecting with Country workshops have provided key insight into a range of these aspects, for example brickwork at the front of the Centre will take visual inspiration from the traditional ochre pits located outside of Dubbo.</p>

Consultation and tender processes

<p>Why was Urban Concepts engaged only for consultation, and not site acquisition?</p>	<p>Urban Concepts was brought on board specifically to assist with community consultation during the design and development application phases of the project. Urban Concepts' services were not required during acquisition of the site.</p>
<p>Have businesses already received tenders to operate the facility?</p> <p>Have builders received documents from NSW Health</p>	<p>The process of finding an operator for the Centre will not start until development consent is given. This will be managed by the NSW Ministry of Health's Centre for Alcohol and Other Drugs. This will occur through an appropriate tender process.</p>

<p>to quote on the Centre's construction?</p>	<p>The process of finding a builder for the Centre will not start until development consent given. This will occur through an appropriate tender process.</p>
<p>How did you ensure the broader community was aware of upcoming consultation opportunities?</p>	<p>The first phase of community consultation was promoted social media, news media, paid advertising, posting flyers in high-traffic locations, and direct communication like letterbox drops in the Spears Drive neighbourhood, and direct contact with health and social service providers.</p> <p>The second phase of community consultation activity was also promoted via social media and news media, along with direct communication like; letterbox drops in the Spears Drive neighbourhood and direct email communication with all parties who had registered their interested via the Urban Talk website.</p> <p>Direct communication will continue as the project progresses and the DA is lodged and then publicly exhibited.</p>
<p>Will there be an Aboriginal co-design process in the NGO tender?</p>	<p>Co-design is a key aspect of the service operator tender and will be part of the NSW Ministry of Health's tender design process to select an operator for the Centre.</p> <p>The Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Residential Rehabilitation Network (ADARRN) Model of Care provides a guide which is built into the tender process, and is also a requirement the successful tenderer will need to follow in operations.</p>

The Centre – operations, staffing and referrals

<p>What role will the Local Health District play in the operation of the Centre?</p>	<p>The Local Health District will not operate the Centre, however it will have ongoing oversight of the Centre's operation to ensure outcomes and performance indicators are being met.</p> <p>A Non-Government Organisation (NGO) will operate the service. The operator will be selected through a tender process conducted by the NSW Ministry of Health's Centre for Alcohol and Other Drugs.</p>
<p>What will the Centre's capacity be and who will it provide services for?</p> <p>Will it cater for men and women or families?</p>	<p>We are looking to establish 16 beds in the first phase of development, ultimately building up to 24. We believe about four to six of those beds will be available for withdrawal (detox) where it is safe to do so in the Centre. In some cases, withdrawal may occur in a hospital, home or custodial setting before a resident comes to the Centre for rehabilitation support.</p> <p>The Centre will welcome people of any gender identity who are over the age of 18. It will provide a safe, mixed-gender environment, including in the structure of programs and occupancy.</p>

	<p>At this time, family units are not included in plans for the Centre. The operator of the Centre will organise for family visits to occur in a safe and appropriate environment, including how service animals or visits with family pets could be safely incorporated into a resident's treatment program.</p> <p>For more information on residential rehabilitation programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Health • Family Drug Support • Alcohol & Drug Information Service NSW • Odyssey House Parents & Children's Program
<p>Will beds be allocated for First Nations people?</p>	<p>The Centre will cater for the entire community, including Aboriginal people. There will not be 'quotas' applied for any cultural group, although it is likely priority will be given to Dubbo-based residents where appropriate.</p>
<p>What type of rehabilitation programs will be run at the Centre?</p>	<p>Addiction and substance dependency can often be tied to a host of underlying factors. While risk factors like family history, trauma or family breakdown are common, the needs of each individual are still different.</p> <p>The future operator will develop and deliver the programs undertaken at the Centre.</p> <p>It is expected that these programs may include both group and individual counselling, developing or managing life skills including relationship-management, and promoting healthy living, nutrition and sleep.</p> <p>There may be programs that use physical activity, art, and activities in the community to support the life skills needed as part of rehabilitation.</p>
<p>How will the Centre manage withdrawal services?</p>	<p>The Centre will provide withdrawal management when it is safe and appropriate in this setting. That assessment will be made by the Centre's operator in consultation with the person and other healthcare providers.</p> <p>More complex detoxification will be undertaken in a hospital setting or, for Drug Court referrals, in a custodial setting. Some residents may have undergone withdrawal at home. Many residents will not require detoxification services at the Centre.</p>
<p>When residents have completed rehabilitation, will follow-up services be available?</p>	<p>Follow-up support is fundamental to the rehabilitation journey, sometimes including access to further training and employment skills, transitional housing assistance, and health services.</p> <p>The Centre's operators will need to work with other agencies and organisations to identify and respond to the needs of each individual resident as they move through rehabilitation and back into the community.</p>

<p>What staffing numbers will there be at the Centre, will it include psychologists and social workers?</p>	<p>The number of staff and the services they provide will be determined by the NGO operating the facility.</p>
<p>Will Aboriginal identified positions and support be available, such as counsellors or social workers?</p>	<p>While we can't predict the staff that will be employed by the NGO operating the facility at this point, the operation of a service that is culturally safe for Aboriginal people will be a priority.</p>
<p>Will the LHD look to upskill staff between now and when the Centre opens?</p>	<p>As the Drug Court of NSW began operations in Dubbo, it became clear there was a skill-set shortage of Alcohol and Other Drug professionals in Dubbo. We want to help make sure that there are appropriately skilled people available to work at the Centre when it opens.</p> <p>We are working closely with the NSW Ministry of Health to focus on mental health staffing and training, with a recent shift in process to include AoD staff development and identification.</p> <p>There is also work being undertaken within universities and training organisations like TAFE to provide nurses and other healthcare workers with the skills they need to work in the mental health sector.</p>
<p>How do referrals from the Drug Court of NSW work?</p>	<p>The Drug Court of NSW is a joint justice and health intervention aimed at reducing drug dependency and offending, and promoting reintegration into the community by supervising the rehabilitation of eligible, drug-dependent offenders instead of imposing full-time imprisonment.</p> <p>People are referred to the Drug Court from a Local or District Court, if they appear eligible and willing to participate in the Drug Court Program.</p> <p>Strict eligibility criteria must be met for a person to be successfully referred. Following successful referral, a person must undergo detoxification and further assessment in custody.</p> <p>While undergoing custodial assessment, a tailored treatment plan is developed which may require the eligible person to enter residential rehabilitation, reside in supported residential care or at an approved community address while undergoing treatment.</p> <p>The Drug Court closely monitors all participants to ensure compliance and may impose sanctions should they not comply with their program. The most severe action, short of program termination, is a custodial sanction.</p>
<p>What is the eligibility criteria people must meet when</p>	<p>To be eligible for the Drug Court program a person must;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be charged with an eligible offence

<p>referred from the Drug Court?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have pleaded guilty to the offence, or indicated they will plead guilty • Be highly-likely to be sentenced to full-time imprisonment if convicted • Be dependent on the use of illicit drugs • Be 18 years of age or over • Be willing to participate and have the mental capacity to participate • Be referred to the Drug Court by a Local or District Court • Live in one of the specified Local Government Areas within the Drug Court's catchment <p>A person is not eligible if they are charged with an offence involving violent conduct, a sexual offence or some types of drug offences. People with a history of violent or dangerous behaviour may also be ineligible.</p>
<p>What if someone is not referred from the Drug Court, what sort of limitations on intake are applied?</p>	<p>Inclusion and exclusion criteria can differ between various residential rehabilitation centres.</p> <p>Those settings for the Dubbo Centre will be determined as the planning process continues, but people will undergo strict and extensive assessment prior to entering a program at the Centre. This includes background and criminal checks, and further risk assessments if needed.</p> <p>Ensuring the safety of all residents, staff and the broader community is fundamental to the effective operation of any residential rehabilitation centre.</p>
<p>What steps are taken to ensure residents or visitors do not bring substances into the facility?</p>	<p>Residential rehabilitation centres provide safe, secure and supportive environments with zero-tolerance for anti-social or criminal behaviour.</p> <p>Residential rehab programs ensure a drug-free environment (including alcohol) through initial screenings and searches, regular drug testing, continuous staff supervision, controlled access and monitored visitations, educational sessions, counselling, and fostering peer support and accountability among residents.</p> <p>Upon entering a program, people are typically required to sign a contract with the operator and make a commitment to comply with rules and regulations for occupancy. Strategies like random urine sampling are used regularly to ensure residents are complying.</p> <p>There are a number of mitigation processes in place to ensure visitors do not bring in illicit drugs or alcohol, these can include bag searches and random urine sampling.</p>
<p>What is the success rate of residential rehabilitation?</p>	<p>There is limited research, due in part to the difficulty measuring 'success', which can differ between each individual and is influenced by a range of factors including the individual's</p>

	<p>motivation, support system, and engagement in follow-up care, while relapse is a common part of the recovery process, often requiring multiple attempts for long-term sobriety.</p> <p>Once the Centre is established, we will look for ways to contribute to the research and understanding of the role of residential rehabilitation and continually monitor progress.</p>
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Broader Impacts – social and community

<p>What interim treatment pathways are available to people who may need the Centre, prior to it opening?</p>	<p>This project has experienced considerable delays, and so the Local Health District has introduced or increased other treatment options in the community.</p> <p>These include the establishment of a Non-Residential Day Rehabilitation Program last year, delivered in collaboration with Lives Lived Well, to expand on the services already available in the community.</p> <p>We continue to offer a number of other non-residential rehabilitation services and programs including the Drug and Alcohol Helpline (1300 877 000), specialist counselling, the Magistrates Early Referral into Treatment program, Opioid Treatment Program, Substance Use in Parenting and Pregnancy Service and the Youth Alcohol and Other Drugs Clinical Support Network.</p> <p>There is also a range of community-based programs and services available through non-government and private organisations in the Dubbo area, including Lives Lived Well, Wellington Aboriginal Corporation Health Service, Bila Muuji Aboriginal Corporation Health Service, Mission Australia, Family Drug Support and the Western NSW Primary Health Network.</p> <p>However, it is important to recognise these options may not be suitable for people who need a long-term solution and require the higher level of care a dedicated rehabilitation facility provides.</p>
<p>How will residents of the Centre get to the hospital in an emergency? Will this increase the amount of Ambulance or emergency traffic?</p>	<p>Clinical staff, including nurses, will be on site at the Centre on a 24-hour basis to provide care for residents, including care and treatment in the event of an emergency.</p> <p>With clinically-trained staff at the Centre around-the-clock, many medical concerns which may typically require an ambulance in a community setting will be able to be addressed on site.</p> <p>If Centre resident was injured or became ill for any reason and required hospital care, they would be transported by ambulance just as any other resident in the neighbourhood would be.</p>

<p>Spears Drive is part of the North West Urban Release area. How will you mitigate the impact of development to ensure a therapeutic environment?</p>	<p>The North West Urban Release Area development is a long-term initiative Dubbo Regional Council will undertake over a number of years to help address the region's growing housing needs.</p> <p>Existing residents adjacent to new release areas will experience construction going on around them while development is underway.</p> <p>The Spears Drive site is 4 hectares, with ample room to provide landscape buffers around the Centre. This is an important consideration the landscaping design to help protect both Centre residents and their neighbours from avoidable noise and disruption.</p>
<p>Will the presence of a rehabilitation centre in a residential area increase the likelihood of, or directly result in more anti-social or criminal behaviour?</p>	<p>Regardless of what kind of development occurred on the Spears Drive site, it would be impossible to guarantee no incidents would ever occur. This is true of any residential neighbourhood.</p> <p>People going into the Centre will be there voluntarily. They want to remove themselves from anti-social or criminal behaviour and are taking active steps to achieve that.</p> <p>Like any health facility, appropriate security will also established and available on-site to ensure the safety of residents, staff members and the community.</p>
<p>Will the presence of a rehabilitation centre in a residential area have an impact on property values?</p>	<p>It is impossible to know exactly what will happen with property values, or what impact any kind of development on the Spears Drive site may have on surrounding properties.</p> <p>A recent analysis of evidence conducted by the Sax Institute, commissioned by the NSW Ministry of Health Centre for Alcohol and Other Drugs, reported mixed findings.</p> <p>One study analysed reported negative findings, however two others demonstrated either no effect on property values or higher sales of homes over time.</p> <p>A consistent theme across studies analysed was that initial concerns or perceptions around the potential impacts were largely unfounded, or did not materialise long-term.</p> <p>We are committed to doing everything possible to mitigate any potential community impact, including ensuring the facility is integrated into the existing streetscape.</p> <p>It will be residential in appearance, and a fundamental aspect of the centre's design will centre around effective landscaping to ensure it is aesthetically suitable and appealing immediately, and long-term.</p>