

In 2019 we presented our 7 year old son to Merredin hospital 7am after him complaining about stomach pains. After running a few test, the Doctor established he has a virus/bacteria somewhere in his bowel and needs to go to Perth for further testing. the Dr said highly unlikely its appendicitis (because he is too young!) and probably just a bad bug (my daughter in the previous few weeks had food poisonings so probably related). We asked whether he could get airlifted and they responded with no, the airplane will not come "his not sick enough". - they did not even attempt to. My son was placed on a drip and we were told to wait for st johns for patient transfer. They said there was no volunteer ambulance drivers in the local area to take him and will need to send someone from Northam to collect him and they to PCH. The drivers from Northam arrived several hours (alleast 6 hours later - NB> we could have been to midland hospital in 2.5hours). The drivers took one look at my son and responded with "No way, we are NOT taking this child, he is way too sick. And, he is on a drip which is not the kind of drip we cant take patients on. This was right in from of my child, the Doctor and Emergency nurse with the second driver constantly on the phone to head office i assume. This elevated my child's pulse so alarms went off causing my son with more stress (as well as me, my husband and our child). After many many many phone calls to head office (i assume) of St Johns and agreeance with the Dr , the drivers agreed to take us to Northam but not without a nurse - so the off duty emergency nurse came with us to Northam. seriously?? by this time my son's situation was not good... very severe pains and distress only having periodic panadol. The drivers initially refused to take my second young child with us saying it wasnt protocol after on the phone they said it was OK. anyway we got her in a high chair. on the way to northam we stopped to take his vitals t each small town. They were in apparently constant contact with St Johns head office and apparently Northam St johns. one of the drivers seemed more concerned about typing on her ipad to meet protocol rather than looking after my child. Northam from Merredin is 90km aprox. away but it took well over 2.5 hours for the drive. We finally arrived at Northam hospital close to dark - apparently the St John's Northam paramedics has been contacted and they were on their way???? 1.5 hours later they arrived and apologisd because they were not contacted to come and get my son and that we were waiting for them in the corridor at Northam (we did not check in fully because apparently the ambulance was coming around the corner) The paramedic finally could administer stronger pain killers and suspected appenditcis. I felt more confident from there on in ... however we did not arrive to Perth Children's hospital until 10pm. he was operated on the following evening.

We are only 260km east of Perth - this should not have happened. it should not have taken this long to get my 7 year old to PCH. The miss communication between St Johns branches and st john and both hospitals was appalling on all levels. I know it ended up being just appendicitis however at the time they did not know what was wrong. i still sadly re-live this episode and it still distresses me. I have little faith in the system. We in the eastern wheatbelt feel forgotten. it should be a basic right to have access to a paramedic locally and direct access to a major hospital especially when children are involved. We are left to our own devices to get to Perth. Disappointing.