



PROPOSED COUNTRY HEALTH BILL FURTHER ISOLATES COUNTRY FAMILIES
4 July 2007

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold urged country people to have their say about the future of their hospitals by commenting on the proposed 'Health Care Bill 2007' that has been released for community consultation.

This proposed Bill only gives country people a choice between two unacceptable options which is really no choice at all, Mrs. Penfold said.

"Country people are just a huge inconvenience to this city centric government."

"The Minister states in his press release, 'The changed governance structures **will eliminate the existing fragmentation** within the public health system, reducing duplication and they'll deliver a more efficient system when it comes to meeting the needs of South Australians.' He then goes on to say, 'The objective is to **consolidate services** and make sure our health services are working in tandem so resources are being used efficiently, and **the best outcomes** are achieved.'

"I ask the Minister, the 'best outcomes' for whom, because it certainly isn't for country people."

The Boards will become Health advisory Councils (HACS) only, and from the Minister's press release, will 'perform a range of advisory, advocacy and fundraising functions related to their local communities.'

"This sounds to me like no power and all responsibility particularly for funding back on our small communities," she said.

We will be given a choice whether these HACS will be incorporated and hold the assets for all country hospitals or just a single entity called a Country Health Community Asset Authority CHCAA but either way according to the Minister's press release, such a body would be, '**required to consult** with and have the agreement of the local HACS **prior to making decisions to dispose of real property**'.

"It is laughable that Hill's Bill apparently aims to 'ensure' assets of local country communities are retained. All that is required is for the CHCAA to consult with and have agreement of local people before making decisions to **dispose** of real property. And so they should! After all, many of our forebears have worked hard to pay for those assets and I have no doubt that without the support and power of local hospital boards, agreement to dispose of assets will be far easier to obtain."

"So the message is clear from the Minister. If the community and the Federal Government don't take responsibility for these small country hospitals, be assured that the State won't be!"

"The proposed bill will isolate country health to further prop up the government's city-centric agenda," Mrs. Penfold said.

“We have metropolitan super schools sucking the lifeblood out of our education system and now the government is hell bent on centralising health with their proposed Adelaide based super hospital. Super departments, all based in Adelaide, will run our state that are completely out of touch with country reality.”

“The recent daylight saving consultation was an example of ‘who cares’ how life for people living beyond Gepp’s Cross is affected,” she said.

Mrs Penfold believes that the government are merely paying lip service to country people under the guise of supposedly unifying administration and relieving country hospital boards of their responsibilities.

Under the Bill local ‘Advisory’ boards will be required to fundraise for local services although the sweetener is that supposedly these ‘advisory boards will provide advice for the whole of country South Australia’.

Mrs Penfold believes that it is the government’s agenda to do away with acute services, including obstetrics in country hospitals and instead downgrade them to nursing home status that will require Federal funding supplemented with local fundraising and possibly some input for lower level ‘wellness’ services from the State.