



**Mental health support evaporating with the drought
March 20 2007**

Mrs Penfold made the comment when she discovered that drought funding is paying two generic counsellors, one at Bordertown and one at Booleroo Centre.

She said the appointments ignore the unmet mental health needs on Eyre Peninsula, where seven district council districts have been accepted for the federal government's Exceptional Circumstances.

"The mid west in particular has been hard hit by several poor years including drought yet these people, who must rely on local help, have once again been forgotten," she said.

Ms Vicki Wagstaff, executive director of Eyre Peninsula Community Alliance, said clients need both financial and health counselling.

"The two work in tandem," she said. "Money is not the only problem that must be sorted out when people go through circumstances that mean they can access EC funding."

"Financial counsellors have proved their worth however the good work that they are doing is negated by clients' unmet needs in other areas, especially mental health needs," she said.

Mrs Penfold said a media report said that Eyre Peninsula has the lowest number of doctors per thousand of population of any area in South Australia.

"The doctors on Eyre Peninsula are already overstretched and cannot cope with long term mental health issues caused by the stress from the fire and the drought in addition to those caused by drugs and schizophrenia.

"The Labor state government's decision not to provide at least one generic counsellor for this huge region defies common sense.

"There is certainly no consideration by this government for the plight of farmers and business people who live on Eyre Peninsula and who are the backbone of this state's wealth and standard of living," she said.

**Regional Mental Health
2 June 2006**

Regional South Australian's are once again the poor cousins when it comes to mental health services, with Eyre Peninsula being allocated just one extra worker to provide a "targeted mental health service".

This followed the announcement of \$5 million dollars to address mental health shortfalls announced last September.

The state labor government is long on rhetoric but short on solutions Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said.

Mrs. Penfold was referring to a response that she has finally received to a letter sent to the Minister for Health John Hill on 30th September.

Mrs Penfold queried what additional services would be delivered to regional areas from the Government's announcement.

In addition to the one allocated worker, the Minister for Mental Health & Substance Abuse Gail Gago at last has responded stating the "staffing the Emergency Departments of all major metropolitan hospitals with mental health liaison nurses 24 hours a day 7 days a week. This will benefit country people with a mental illness who present to a metropolitan hospital emergency department by providing them with improved access to high quality and timely specialist mental health responses."

"Does the Minister seriously think that people in regional areas will present themselves at a metropolitan emergency department?" Mrs. Penfold asked.

"Perhaps it is time the Minister actually travelled to the regions to see that her response is ludicrous and demeaning to the many sufferers of mental illness in country South Australia."
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