



**Wudinna without Doctor
16 November 2005**

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold expressed grave concern about health services on Eyre Peninsula when she learned that Wudinna would be without a doctor for two weeks.

This means that the Wudinna acute care hospital does not have a doctor immediately on call and raises serious questions about the operation of the hospital.

Mrs Penfold said it was unacceptable the public was only informed by means of a notice stuck on the post office door on the 10th of November.

"There has been no press release and no letter drop to help inform the local people despite other hospitals being over an hour away and valuable life saving time potentially lost in an emergency.

"It is a well known fact that the first hour is critical in terms of survival.

"There are 8 babies due in the district which is located on the busy Eyre Highway and they are being left without a doctor only days after the new Minister for Health John Hill's assurances that he and the Labor state government are 'treating this hospital very seriously'," she said.

Mrs Penfold said the notice stated that Dr Crewal would be unavailable for consultation until 26th November, that no doctor would be available in Wudinna during this time, and that no locum would be available.

A handwritten note at the bottom of the page stated "Dr Crewal available 17/18 November".

People were instructed to contact the hospital for medical inquiries.

Mrs Penfold said it was no wonder that the new Minister for Health, John Hill, refused to answer her question in parliament when she asked for a continuation of the undertaking given by the former Minister for Health that acute care services would be retained in Eyre Peninsula hospitals.

At the public meeting at Wudinna on Tuesday 8 November where an abbreviated version of the report of the clinical review into the hospital was presented, those present were left with a concern that the hospital would not be retained other than as a nursing home funded by the federal government.

When Mrs Penfold pressed for an explanation, Mr Hill said "... the government and the board have been treating this hospital very seriously. There is every indication that that is a hospital that is back on its feet and will be supported. We have no intention of downgrading it."

However Mrs Penfold said such assurances raised grave doubts when compared with the facts.

"I believe that other hospitals and medical staff on Eyre Peninsula and around the State are facing similar impositions in the delivery of health care to their communities.

"While I would like to believe the Minister that the hospital will 'be supported' and 'We have no intention of down

grading it' the facts do not augur well for the Wudinna hospital or for the future of any country health services under this Labor state government," she said. ENDS