



**CUMMINS**  
**29th October 2008**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders) (15:15): Cummins is one of the small towns in my electorate situated in an agricultural community but encompassing many other facets such as national parks, tourism, plus coastline and villages along with all the industries that go with the sea.

It was one of the first places in Australia to open a branch of the Bendigo Bank adopting the slogan 'Cummins is a can do community'. The district has been galvanised by the government's blundering Country Health Care Plan that is anything but caring and threatened a major reduction of services at the Cummins Hospital, possibly even closure of the hospital.

The Cummins community, as the slogan says, is a 'can do' community. Hence, residents not only fight to save their hospital but also work to upgrade it and to improve the facilities and treatments available locally, thus lessening cost and inconvenience to people in the district and providing the area with a much higher level of safety and protection.

Despite the drought, the world financial meltdown and all obstacles, the community has set about raising upwards of \$50,000 for the hospital's emergency department. Several locals testify to the fact that they are alive today because of the speed with which medical aid was given to them in an emergency in Cummins. A local committee has undertaken to raise \$25,000, which will be matched dollar for dollar by the Cummins Community Bendigo Bank to meet the target.

Once again, residents in rural and regional South Australia have to purposely fundraise and work so that they can have the medical and health facilities that metropolitan people take for granted and which Labor seems to believe are unnecessary for anyone outside Adelaide. It is interesting to note the comments about the situation under the Labor government in New South Wales from Dr Scott Lewis, vice-president of the Rural Doctors' Association of Australia on the ABC yesterday when he said:

New South Wales in particular is really suffering poorly at the moment with widespread closures of hospitals and birthing services.

Fighting back is what this Cummins 'can do' community does. This contrasts with a government that can only work on closures, reductions and diminution of services like its New South Wales counterpart. The major fundraiser for the project is a series of four concerts produced under coordinators Trevor Guppy and Liz Mickan, musical directors Kerry Cloughton and David Pearson, and choreographer Joanne Quigley.

Profits from the concerts, each of which have sold out, will virtually achieve the targeted amount. However, I have yet to have it confirmed that, under the new centralised hospital management, they will actually be able to expend the funds they raise on their hospital as intended, as expenditure over \$5,000 now has to be approved in Adelaide.

The concert program is based on the theme of war and peace under the heading *As Time Goes By* and includes singing, dancing and readings to produce a very entertaining, accomplished and, at times, emotional show. The cast of 40 to 50 performers is supported by the same number of backstage hands, front-of-house workers and

general dogsbodies.

The band of 21 musicians has been practising since March. Locals took their instruments out of storage—principally, brass and woodwind—polished them up, and are enjoying the revival. Some have not played since their school days. David Pearson said that help with music has come from many quarters, such as the Australian Army Band willingly providing an arrangement of a *Waltzing Matilda/Last Post* medley. An old army tank, spotlighted at night, stands in the front hall. Patrons enter under camouflage nets to buy their tickets, are given dog tags to locate their seats and are directed by ushers dressed in vintage clothes.

Like all country communities, Cummins district has had many locals in the defence forces going back to World War I and even a few from neighbouring areas who went to the Boer War in 1899. Photographs and video footage, taken by Vietnam veteran Geoff 'Fox' Holman during his time in Vietnam, form the backdrop for some of the items. It is a moving insight into life on the front line. The evening's theme fittingly includes the *Last Post* and *Ode to the Fallen* appropriately delivered by 'Fox'. It is a timely reminder that country people today are still fighting social justice issues for which family members and friends fought and died.

Lower Eyre Peninsula CEO Rob Pearson reads extracts from a journal kept by his great grandfather, Thomas William Pearson, on active service in World War I. The journal starts on 1 January 1916, when Thomas was encamped in South Australia, and the last entry is dated 17 September 1916, the day before he was killed at Ypres in France. **Time Expired.**

#### **The remainder of the speech follows:**

I quote from a few entries:

**May 30<sup>th</sup> leaving Egypt:** Left Alexandria today. I'm on guard all day looking for mines and submarines. No man to be without a lifebelt and all guards have 15 rounds of live ammunition and a rifle.

**August 1<sup>st</sup> in Fance:** Poor Sandy! Killed in fight at Pozieres while rescuing a wounded comrade. He was a machine gunner.  
I gave his mate Rob's address to write to his mother.

**August 21<sup>st</sup>:** Tremendous fire last night. Five men killed close to me. We dug one out alive under fearful fire. Ordered to get Alf Clarke and we carried poor fellow to dressing station. Terrible sights and sounds. Men's heart failing them. Fearful!!! No better today. Dug new trench tonight.

**September 15<sup>th</sup>:** We are in dugouts. Plenty of rats and mice. We don't fall in tonight. Stiff bombardment. Blow up Hill 60.  
Wet night. Hard work.

His last words in his last entry two days later were to his wife, Julie, "Wrote to Julie".

The present Cummins community keeps alive the tradition of selflessness and serving and caring for others that has made Australian service men and women renowned across the world. It is good to see that spirit alive and well in this small corner of our state. ENDS