



Adrian Pederick MP

Member for Hammond

House of Assembly

7 May 2014

COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICES

Grievance Debate

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:04): I rise today to speak about the lack of appropriate health services available to Hammond residents living in Goolwa and the Fleurieu Peninsula as well. The Fleurieu Peninsula is one of the many magnificent regional areas to live in in South Australia, and sustained population growth in the area reflects this. However, I am continually contacted about concerns regarding the lack of appropriate services available to the area, particularly regarding health.

First and foremost, my concerns do not lie with the local GPs, nurses and medical support staff who serve the Fleurieu Peninsula community. Regional medical staff do a fantastic job with the limited resources available, often working ridiculously long hours to better the lives of those living in the area. My concerns rest with the state Labor government. The state government has driven this state into devastating debt and deficit, and I would be outraged if regional health is impacted in the coming state budget.

We have heard the government bang on about its charter for a stronger regional policy and its new-found commitment to be more responsive to the needs of South Australia's regional communities. However, forgive me for being sceptical after 12 years of neglect. If this government is to govern for all the people, those in regional areas such as the Fleurieu Peninsula deserve the same health services as are afforded to their city cousins. Whilst health services as a whole on the Fleurieu Peninsula do require improvement, there are specific matters I would like to bring to the attention of the parliament of South Australia.

Firstly, it is devastating to hear that the Southern Fleurieu Cancer Support and Resources Group is facing service closures because of changes made to transport programs by the health department. The group, which relies entirely on donations, fundraising and volunteers, provides a door-to-door cancer car transport service for Fleurieu Peninsula residents who need to travel to Adelaide for cancer-related treatment and medical appointments. In the past year, this group made 450 trips to Adelaide and carried 1,166 passengers at a cost of only \$21,000. However, the service is currently at risk because passengers relying on the service are no longer eligible for reimbursement thanks to changes made by the health department to the transport assistance scheme.

A cancer sufferer recently highlighted to me that it costs her \$44 for a return trip to the Flinders Medical Centre from the Fleurieu for radiotherapy treatment, a total of \$1,320 to undergo her radiotherapy program, five days per week for six weeks. Isn't she suffering enough? Combined with the current lack of affordable and public transport between metropolitan areas and the Fleurieu and residents being ineligible for the Patient Assisted Transport Scheme due to the hundred kilometre distance threshold, the cancer car is extremely important. Residents are being left in a vulnerable position.

Finally, I am concerned with the limited services available for residents suffering from mental health issues and substance abuse. There are very limited services of support and rehabilitation for people and their families who are suffering from and impacted upon by drug addiction. This has become a very common issue in regional areas, which I am consistently learning about. Currently, Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia visits the Fleurieu Peninsula on limited occasions, and the closest

support group for families is based in Hallett Cove, 70 kilometres away. These families are suffering. Surely this support is not enough.

Secondly, whilst it is refreshing to hear the state government has committed to improving mental health in this state, this dire situation requires serious attention. As stated yesterday by the Governor, the rate of suicide in South Australian rural areas is significantly worse than those in metropolitan areas. One constituent recently expressed how difficult mental health is for her family and simply how bad the situation is, and I quote:

My son who is only 19 has tried to take his own life 3 times in the last month. The only way I got him help was to have him detained under the Mental Health Act.

This is outrageous, and support services must be improved. I have raised this matter with the government in the past, and it is disappointing that my concerns continue to fall on deaf ears. I am sure the member for Finniss wholly supports me in this endeavour. I call on the government of South Australia to improve health services on the Fleurieu Peninsula through its supposed commitment to regional South Australia.

Time expired.

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