



Adrian Pederick MP
Member for Hammond

House of Assembly
24th Sep 2014

Regional Health Services

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:40 :42): I rise to speak to the motion by the member for Stuart, which states:

That this house establish a select committee to inquire into and report on—

- 1.The review by the Health Performance Council on the operations of the health advisory councils in accordance with the Health Care Act 2008.
- 2.The current provision and plans for future delivery of health services in regional South Australia, with particular reference to—
 - (a)the role and responsibilities of health advisory councils and the benefits, or otherwise, of the removal of local hospital boards;
 - (b)amalgamations of health advisory councils in regional South Australia;
 - (c)trends in local community fundraising for medical equipment and services;
 - (d)how funds currently and previously raised by local communities are held and spent, with particular regard to authorisation and decision-making;
 - (e)timing of provision of finalised operation budgets in country hospitals;
 - (f)ownership and transfer of property titles of country hospitals;
 - (g)the process and timing of the hiring of staff for new and existing positions;
 - (h)South Australian Ambulance Service arrangements, including the role of volunteers, fees and fundraising and the benefits, or otherwise, to local community events;
 - (i)scope of practice of general practitioners in country hospitals and the provision of accident and emergency care;

- (j) procurement by Country Health SA and the benefits, or otherwise, to country communities;
- (k) mandated fees to DPTI for management of maintenance and minor works;
- (l) the benefits, or otherwise, of all rural and remote South Australia being classified as one primary health network within the federal health system;
- (m) the implementation of EPAS in country hospitals;
- (n) integrated mental health inpatient centres for regional South Australia; and
- (o) any other relevant matters.

Certainly, I am a strong supporter of country hospitals. We have seen, over the years, many attempts by the Labor Party in this state to distance themselves from country health. We have seen the feigned outrage in this house today at this proposed inquiry by a select committee because the government is saying that they want the Social Development Committee to inquire into country health. Well, the Social Development Committee has had over three years to inquire into this.

I note that I am a newly elected member on the Social Development Committee, and I have made sure that that reference stays on the books so that we can get to it, but I am a realist. When we have discussed it at Social Development Committee meetings, the Presiding Member, the Hon. Gerry Kandelaars, has even made the point, 'This is a very political reference.' What has everyone to fear? We have the Presiding Member of the Social Development Committee not wanting to debate the issue. We have pushed up other new references since then; a new one was tabled in the house yesterday by the member for Reynell, which is quite a fine reference. But why are all these other references being pushed ahead of a reference that was put 3½ years ago?

We have seen all this feigned outrage from the Labor government about why the Social Development Committee will not look at country health, but I will give you the simple reason: because the comrades have all got together and decided that it is too dangerous to talk about. That is exactly what has happened. I do not know why they come in here feigning all this outrage when they would have had the meeting, all of the group. We know how it happens: they would all get together; and they have to vote according to one song sheet, especially the backbenchers.

I give credit to the backbenchers, such as the member for Ashford, who do speak out on some legislation. But when the comrades come to vote, they have to vote as one because that is how it works—and that is exactly how it works. They are embarrassed by our freedom of choice and our liberties and our true values as Liberal members on this side of the house.

Members interjecting:

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! It is only Wednesday; this is Thursday behaviour. Let's do Wednesday behaviour and listen to each other in respectful silence, reminding members that it is unparliamentary to interject and worse so to respond.

Mr PEDERICK: What I say to members on the other side and members in the other house is that if they are so serious about country health and having this before the Social Development Committee, tell the member for Reynell, tell the member for Torrens and tell the Hon. Gerry Kandelaars; if that is where they want to go, that this has to happen. I do not think that is going to happen because they have had ample opportunity for over three years to do that, so I fully support the member for Stuart's reference to pushing this into a select committee.

Now I want to talk about the Royal Adelaide Hospital—and, before all the outrage sparks up from the other side, it is linked to country health. Why do you think it has a helicopter landing pad on the roof? So that it can receive patients from country South Australia—the ones who have been involved in accidents or the ones who need high-needs care in a hurry—who need to be flown into the Royal Adelaide Hospital. It is just simple. Why do we have all these helicopter landing pads at places like the Murray Bridge hospital in my electorate and many other hospitals throughout the country?

Mrs Vlahos: The Lyell McEwin.

Mr PEDERICK: That's right. They can land at many of the metropolitan hospitals in South Australia, so there is that direct link for country health. What makes me so angry in this place is that long before I was here, about 25 years ago or so, there was a move by the Labor government of the time to shut down hospitals in my electorate. I remember protesting on the front steps of this place about the threat of Tailem Bend being shut down, and that was reignited in the years that John Hill was the minister for health. I just do not think that people in the Labor Party understand how it works in the bush.

We also had the debate about the Keith hospital and its funding. People who really understand the state and how it works, especially people who travel to Melbourne, for example, for footy finals—like last weekend for the preliminary final, when Port Adelaide put up such a valiant effort and, sadly, did not quite get across the line—

Members interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: I will just say that at least we have a coach and we were in the prelim final.

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: That's it. All I am saying is that many thousands of people travel the Dukes Highway, and the Dukes Highway splits off 40 hectares of my farm on one side, so I live right there and see how it happens. In fact, I saw the police pull someone up for speeding right in front of me as I was coming out of the gate on Sunday. When things happen—

Mr Whetstone: A Labor voter.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes—we need those medical services to get us to the local hospitals or to get the Westpac helicopter or other rescue helicopters in to pick people up. I am well aware of actions in my community where there have been incidents and the helicopter has had to land either on farms in the paddocks or they have shut the road to get the helicopter on the site to get people on board so that they can get to Adelaide for the required treatment. That is an absolutely vital service, to have that link to the city.

We do need the absolutely vital health services in the bush. We have issues with staffing and we have issues with attracting doctors, getting international doctors up to speed so that they can operate in our country. That is fair enough; they need to have the right registration requirements, as we do not want to have an issue like Queensland did in Bundaberg. We need so much more of it because so many communities are crying out for better health services in the bush.

The former minister for health quite frankly scared me one day when he made a point in this house that there are even hospitals or surgeries in his electorate that could not attract enough doctors to service a suburban area. If that cannot happen, what happens in the country? Parts of my electorate that were formerly in my electorate, like Karoonda and Lameroo, know what it is like to have doctors who have to fill in from either Mannum or Loxton to keep up those vital health services.

I note that the medical services in the Mallee do a great job. They have tele facilities and the nurses are there on a Saturday, and I can quote an example. One of my sons had a bit of concussion one day at footy and the nurses did a great job and they were able to talk to the doctor in Loxton to get advice on what to do. These are absolutely vital links for our community and you have to have these health services in the country so you do not get all that rush on effect so everyone ends up in the city with the obvious social dislodgement of all the people who need to support the people who need those health services.

In closing, in the little time I have left, it is interesting when we want to go on an official visit of even our local hospitals we get shepherded around and we have the minders all around us. In the last couple of months I have had to go to local hospitals for various health reasons for my family and we get to have a good look at what is going on. There needs to be more investment not just in infrastructure but also staffing levels and making sure that the right health professionals are attracted into regional areas. At the end of the day, the Labor Party must get serious and support this motion, because the Social Development Committee is just not going to get to it.