

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 27 June 2006

HEALTH SERVICE, MALLEE

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): Six years ago the hospital boards of Pinnaroo, Lameroo and Karoonda commenced a process of community consultation (outlining the population base and health needs of the area) to bid for the appropriate commonwealth and state agreements to form a multi-purpose service. This arrangement required the amalgamation of the three boards and a culture of cooperation across the three sites. The bid was successful as the Mallee Health Service was formed four years ago. This board is chaired by Kathleen Gregurke and it is made up of members from each of the three communities.

Efficiencies in financial management and the best use of human resources from this voluntary amalgamation have led to increased and coordinated services for the clients of the Mallee, particularly in the areas of community health and primary health care. The board's strategy is to promote healthy communities and also to allow the elderly and infirm to stay in their own home for as long as possible.

Financial efficiencies have allowed the Mallee Health Service to complete a significant upgrade of the aged care facility at the Pinnaroo Soldiers Memorial Hospital at a cost of approximately \$500 000. This upgrade includes the conversion of the theatre complex into a gymnasium and the establishment of a health promotion room. The health promotion room was established in memory of Sister Florence Casson (enlisted from Pinnaroo whilst she was matron of the hospital), who died as a prisoner of war on Banka Island in World War II.

Karoonda and Districts Soldiers Memorial Hospital has a new roof and the day centre is currently undergoing a much-needed extension and upgrade costing approximately \$100 000. The community health team is mobile over the catchment area of the Mallee, with offices at Lameroo. This team is not large enough to service the Mallee and requires extension or relocation as services and needs grow.

Recently, I launched a mobile health promotion van for the Mallee Health Service. The van will assist with health promotion activities at shows, field days, sporting and community events. The van will also be used to service the Mallee Health Service's smaller satellite communities of Parilla, Geranium and Jabuk. The van, built by Gawler Caravan Centre at a cost of approximately \$90 000, will be available for use by other health services and community groups.

From 1 July 2006, Pinnaroo, Lameroo and Karoonda will all have a resident GP. Pinnaroo has been without a doctor for several months but has recently been successful in the recruitment of another doctor. The Mallee Health Service had (and continues to have) enormous support from the Rural Doctors Work Force Agency and divisions of general practice to achieve this outcome. Each of the three sites (Pinnaroo, Lameroo and Karoonda) have an executive officer/director of nursing, and there is an acting director of community health for the whole Mallee Health Service.

From 1 July 2006, the new Country Health Board (in conjunction with two city boards) will take over the control of all country health services in administering health services in this state. We will follow this new arrangement with interest, but I know that the Mallee area will have its voice heard with Kathleen Gregurke of Parrakie appointed to the Country Health Board. I congratulate Kathleen on her appointment. We will keep a close eye out to ensure that adequate health services are delivered to the Mallee.