

Letter to the Editor

I wish to respond to certain remarks made by Wilbur Klein (Murray Pioneer 1/8/08) in reference to the Opposition's actions on Country Health and our engagement with the country medical community.

Mr Klein states the SA Nationals are an 'independent' political party. I have no doubt many Chaffey constituents would find that notion hard to accept. Their local member Karlene Maywald's support in her cabinet role of the Labor Government's deeply flawed Country Health Care Plan has left many wondering just who they voted for.

Mr Klein's suggestion that the Opposition has turned this into a political football is patently incorrect. The Liberal party has been working with constituents to secure a better health deal for country people.

The flood of enquiries and complaints to all country members' electoral offices demanded our involvement, which has exposed serious flaws in a plan that has since been withdrawn.

Liberal MPs identified people's needs and brought them to the attention of the government, the media and those members of the public who had not realised what was about to happen.

To suggest country members were absent from discussions on this topic until recently is false. The matter was first raised with me in late 2006 when the government's plan to disband country hospital health boards – most of which were doing a fine job – was made known. It should be noted that the Opposition fought for the retention of country hospital boards.

There was outcry and following discussions with various people in the country health community, the subject was raised in the House on many occasions. I myself spoke on the matter numerous times between September 2006 and July 2007.

The matter died down following reassurances from Minister Hill that all would be well and communities would be consulted and their comments heeded.

The Opposition maintained a watching brief on the plan's progress and were quick to react when it became apparent that the minister's assurances were somewhat hollow.

I trust Mr Klein's comment that "neither party has bothered to fully understand the issues and complexity of country health services" was made abundantly clear to his political colleague, the chameleon minister Maywald.

The Opposition has done its job of vigorously opposing bad policy and the vast majority of country South Australians are grateful for our involvement.

Yours etc
Adrian Pederick MP
Member for Hammond
August 6th, 2008