

PUBLIC



Hon Brian Ellis MLC

Chairman

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

18 – 32 Parliament Place

WEST PERTH WA 6000

PETITION NUMBER 56 – DERBY/WEST KIMBERLEY SHIRE – OPPOSE THE WITHDRAWL OF HEALTH SERVICES

Dear Chairman and Committee Members

The Shire of Derby/West Kimberley recently provided the Legislative Council with a petition in relation to the withdrawal of health services in Derby.

The petition is a response to the loss of many of their specialist health services to Broome, following the transfer of the region's base hospital from Derby to Broome.

This has seen a loss of specialist medical staff who were previously based in Derby now been relocated to Broome. Derby residents and residents from surrounding areas, including the Fitzroy Valley and pastoralist stations, are therefore unable to access essential services such as radiology, surgery, paediatric, obstetrics and gynaecology specialists when they present at the hospital. These services are now available on a visiting specialist roster, or patients are required to make the 440km round trip to Broome to access a specialist service for immediate attention. This trip is made even longer for residents of communities and stations that are further north and east of Derby. These ailments can range from something such as a broken bone to a case of appendicitis and everything in between.

Derby Hospital does have an emergency department and also offer a clinic, due to no private practice been available in Derby. However, if a patient presents at the emergency department or the clinic, and requires further investigative procedures or assistance, these are not available on site unless a visiting specialist is available.

Following a recent review of health services in the region, the Minister announced that two new specialist positions would be appointed to the Kimberley region. One of these is a paediatric specialist and the other a regional physician. It is not clear at this stage where these positions will be based and when they will commence, however with the current situation at Derby hospital, it appears unlikely that any specialist would be based in Derby.



Royalties for Regions has also assisted by supporting the Royal Flying Doctor Service, however this service should be required for the most serious of cases and not for situations where services should be available at a local level.

Derby residents, as well as residents from surrounding communities and stations, are highly concerned that the lack of specialist staff at Derby Hospital, will impact on their health and well being.

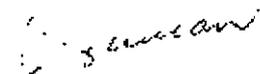
Stories such as individuals having to wait six weeks for a cortisone injection due to no radiologist been available in Derby to perform the procedure along with people having to travel to Broome unassisted by ambulance in emergency situations for surgical treatment are becoming common place.

The residents of Derby and the surrounding region are concerned that they have to travel hundreds of kilometres to Broome to access the services they need. Accommodation options are extremely limited for people coming into a regional centre such as Broome, for treatment, and this leads to an increase in the number of itinerant persons around the town and adds to the homelessness problems that are already escalated in Broome. Through this model of health delivery, additional pressures are placed on the regional centre, as well as on the people who have to leave the place in which they live, their family and support network in order for them to receive appropriate treatment.

I therefore support Derby retaining a base of specialist services on site at the Derby Hospital, so residents do not have to access these services some 220km away in Broome. The health and well being of residents appears to be somewhat compromised through the lack of a comprehensive local health facility, whose services have been in gradual decline over the years.

What is required is extra specialist staff at individual health services so that Derby and Broome can individually maintain the needs of their communities, which will reduce patient waitlists, staffing pressures and the need for patients to travel to receive treatment, which are issues currently faced by both Derby and Broome hospitals and patients.

Yours sincerely



Hon Wendy Duncan MLC

Member for Mining & Pastoral Region

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Regional Development; Lands

30 March 2010