

**Shire of Derby /
West Kimberley**

SHIRE OF DERBY/WEST KIMBERLEY

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OUR REF.

YOUR REF.

22nd March, 2010



Hon. Brian Ellis MLC
Standing Committee on Environment
and Public Affairs,
Legislative Council Committee Office,
18-32 Parliament Place,
WEST PERTH. W.A. 6000

Dear Sir,

PETITION NO. 56 – SHIRE OF DERBY/WEST KIMBERLEY – OPPOSE THE WITHDRAWAL OF HEALTH SERVICES

Thank you for your correspondence of 16th March, 2010 regarding the above. As requested, a submission in letter form follows. This matter has not been taken to the Ombudsman.

Point 1 of Petition No. 56 – Surgery is able to be performed at any time at Derby Hospital by a resident Derby surgeon.

Delivery of specialist services is now being provided on a visiting basis. General surgery is provided 4-5 days per month. Patients are offered access to surgery in Broome or Perth if their clinical condition requires quicker access to elective surgery. Emergency surgery is to the on-call surgery site in the Kimberley and patients are transported accordingly. Both Regional Surgeon positions are based in Broome.

Point 2 of Petition No. 56 – Paediatrician/s remain based in Derby for the Kimberley Region

There are 2 full time Paediatric positions and a Paediatric Registrar position for the Kimberley Region. Paediatricians from Perth (2) rotate in Derby so there is always a Paediatrician available. The bulk of paediatric work at the moment is in Derby and Fitzroy Crossing. Following a rebuild in Broome, a further review is to be undertaken. At present all we can be assured of is that the current paediatric service arrangement continues in Derby for possibly the next 12 months. This is cause for major alarm in our communities as each time there is a review, we lose more of our services and paediatrics is essential.

Point 3 of Petition No. 56 – There is no further removal of health services from Derby

- The two Regional Surgeon positions are now located in Broome.
- The Regional Obstetrician and Gynaecologist position (previously located in Derby) is now located in Broome and provides a visiting service to Derby and Kununurra usually one week per month based on need.
- There is the looming possibility that Paediatrics will be relocated to Broome in the not too distant future.

The True Kimberley

- The pharmacy warehouse and supply function formerly located in Derby is now located in Broome.
- Bed capacity at Derby Hospital has reduced from 54 in 2001 to 32 in 2008/09. The hospital runs on 2 wards – General/Paediatrics and Maternity. There is concern in the community that children are being “lumped in” with all types of cases in General Ward.
- Increase in patient transfers to Broome decreases ambulance availability in Derby and the Fitzroy Valley. The round trip between Derby and Broome is close to 500km.

General Comment

1. Accommodation for Health Professionals

Accommodation for health professionals in Derby is very poor. This in itself has proved to be one of the main reasons that we are unable to attract and retain professional health staff. Some very solid suggestions have been put forward in the past to address this situation but have been dismissed. The funding allocation for additional new houses in 2007 was diverted to the Pilbara.

This single issue is the one which comes to the fore on every occasion where the question arises of why we cannot attract professional health staff to Derby.

2. Comparison of Service Provision

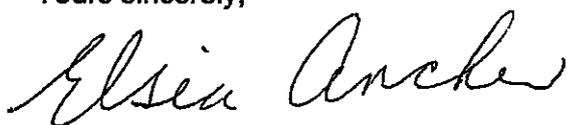
In 2002, the Shire commissioned a study into the future direction of health care delivery (“*Shaping the Future Direction of Health Care Delivery*” Interim Report by Bonython Consulting – Nov. 2002). The report demonstrated the large discrepancy in the clinician per population ratio in the service delivery area by comparison with state ratios as a benchmark. In addition to the significant shortfall against State ratios, the situation in the Derby/West Kimberley locality was significantly worse than the figures presented as the benchmark figures did not take into account a number of other factors as outlined in the report. It may be over 7 years since the report was released but little has changed.

3. Geographical Location

The service delivery area for the Derby Health Services covers 118,560 sq. km. and takes in the townsites of Derby, Fitzroy Crossing and Camballin along with some 60 remote Aboriginal communities and outstations. Derby has traditionally been the regional centre for the Kimberley and despite the decline of this role over the past decade and the relocation of more and more essential services to Broome, Kimberley Aboriginal people continue to have strong historical connections to Derby and those living in remote localities frequently have the benefit of extended families in Derby who are able to provide accommodation and support when visits to Derby are made. It is quite the opposite when they are forced to access services in Broome which is situated at the southernmost extremity of the Kimberley region and only adds to the already serious situation of homelessness and people (sometimes children) “sleeping rough” in and around Broome.

In conclusion, I trust that the Standing Committee will give earnest consideration to the points raised. We are most anxious that the Derby Health Service has the capacity to meet the needs of its clients into the future.

Yours sincerely,



Elsie Archer,
SHIRE PRESIDENT

JP8837