



Submission to the Standing Committee on Health and Disability

Inquiry into the closure of the Wanniassa Medical Centre

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I am a patient of the Wanniassa Medical Centre (the Centre). My partner and our two small children are also patients at the Centre. This submission is both a personal account of the impact of the Centre's closure on myself and my family, and a more fundamental questioning of the 'environment' that has allowed the closure to occur.

The key question arising from the closure of the Wanniassa Medical Centre is how has a private business (Primary Healthcare) been allowed to secure and determine the fate of a service that is fundamental to the quality of life of all members of the community?

Access to health care is a basic right for everyone in the community and should not be open to the whims of businesses seeking to please shareholders. Access to local, suburban health care must also be protected as a basic right, especially for the most vulnerable in our community such as the elderly, people with disabilities and people with chronic health issues. These are the people most likely to require health care and least likely to be able to cope with travelling greater distances to see their doctor, particularly if they are reliant on public transport. There are also many other people for whom a more distant health care service poses serious problems to their ability to access timely medical care.

For those in the community who will be unable to follow their doctor to the centre in Phillip, the closure of Wanniassa Medical Centre also seriously underestimates the importance of the relationship that develops between a doctor and patient. Although these people will, no doubt, find new doctors, the loss will be in the trust developed (for some people, over many years) and the unwritten nuances of diagnoses and care not found in the patient's records.

A secondary issue arising from the closure of the Wanniassa Medical Centre has been the manner in which it has been conducted. The swiftness of its closure is one issue. Lack of notification is another. I have not received any personal notification of the Centre's closure nor where I may find my doctor (and my own medical records), apart from the stories that have appeared in the media. On Monday, 11 August 2008 my two year old son became quite ill and I rang the Wanniassa Medical Centre expecting to be redirected to a new phone number for the Phillip centre. Instead, I was greeted by the old Wanniassa Medical Centre voice recording advising me of its opening hours and the after

hours locum contact number. There was no mention of the Centre's closure and its move to Phillip. This was very distressing. As a long-standing patient of the Centre and for a service so vital as a doctors' surgery, I would have thought that notification of the closure would be mandatory.

In short, I am utterly dismayed about the closure of the Wanniasa Medical Centre and the history that has lead us to this point – a point where business interests are allowed to override the fundamental needs of a community.