

From: Sab

Sent: Thursday, 14 August 2008 6:56 PM

To: MACDONALD

Cc: BURKE

Subject: closure of Wanniasa Medical Centre

Dear Ms MacDonald

I heard on the radio news today that public submissions in relation to the recent closure of the Wanniasa Medical Centre are being accepted until COB Friday 15 August 2008.

I sent a letter of concern to Primary Health Care on 6 August 2008, outlining the following concerns:

- media reports that appointments would no longer be taken, and that the doctor of choice would not be guaranteed
- concerns in relation to the quality of my partner's ongoing treatment (he was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma 4 years ago, and continues to undergo treatment)
- my own adverse experiences of the Ginninderra Medical Centre, which is also owned by this corporation
- bulk-billing vs private billing (I would prefer to pay for a quality service rather than be bulk-billed for a sub-standard one)
- my view that the relocation had more to do with corporate profitability than any real regard for individual patient care
- the lack of nearby/readily-accessible public transport, and the very limited parking in the vicinity of the clinic (including access to disability parking)

Yesterday, I received a response from Dr Henry Bateman, General Manager of the Medical Centre. This comprised of 2 separate letters, which seemed to contradict each other. The first (and larger) document appeared very politically-oriented, and the arguments supporting the closure (and subsequent conclusion by Dr Bateman) can be summarised in the following points:

- the Federal Government is forcing these amalgamations of medical practices because it is making the management of smaller clinics too burdensome and expensive
- the medicare rebate is too low
- there is insufficient profit in running smaller (7 doctor or less) clinics
- this results in lower bulk-billing rates
- an assertion was made that the ACT has the highest ratio per doctors per capita in the nation
- the benefits of bulk-billing as opposed to private billing were discussed
- longer opening hours were available in Phillip
- minimal additional travelling time (from the original clinic) would be incurred, with added comments that people will, after all, travel distances for specialty shopping, community events and social activities
- there would be an availability of ancillary services in Phillip, including a pharmacy (there is already a pharmacy in Wanniasa which will now be disadvantaged)

This was followed by the conclusion that it was better for the patient, and the community in general, because the centre will be open 365 days a year for extended hours, and because ancillary services can be accessed without multiple trips being required. A rather snide comment followed that Dr Bateman was aware people disliked change, despite the fact this was for the greater good.

The second letter was very interesting, after reading the first. It, in essence, it advised the following:

- appointments would continue to be available with the doctor of choice at the new site
- the hours of operation would be similar to those at the Wanniasa Medical Centre
- the AMA-recommended fee would be charged for the service (so no bulk-billing)
- a limited courtesy bus service would be available for those with mobility problems

It is interesting to note, from comparison of the information contained in both letters, that all arguments presented by Primary Health Care to justify the relocation of the Medical Centre are effectively negated in the second letter.

For your information and consideration.

Kind regards
Sabine Kark