

## COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICES

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (15:47): I wish to build on the theme that has been promoted today about the concerns that the opposition, and indeed the people of Keith, Ardrossan and Moonta, have in regard to country health.

I need to clarify a few things. The question I posed to the minister in question time was about a Mr Ross Lennox, who had a cardiac arrest on the Ardrossan Bowling Club green early in 2009. The ambulance was called immediately and the hospital was also contacted, and two staff members from the hospital responded immediately with a Thomas pack and revived Mr Lennox after he had been without a heartbeat for some 25 minutes.

Mr Lennox is the man who has publicly stated that he is adamant that his life was saved because of the skills of the staff and the capacity of the Ardrossan Hospital to ensure that he got the treatment that he needed absolutely as soon as possible. It is important that that message actually get out there. What happened today on the steps of Parliament House was just the partial culmination of the efforts that will be made to try to preserve these hospitals.

Keith held a meeting on Thursday last week; I did not attend, but I went to the Ardrossan and Moonta public meetings which were also held last week, and both were wonderful examples of a community rallying together to ensure that they do all they possibly can to preserve what is near and dear to them. We had nearly 1,000 people in Moonta late in the afternoon. It was a great turnout, and people spoke passionately and raised real questions that they wanted answers to; unfortunately, there is only one person who can give them that, and that is the minister.

I am grateful that the minister has agreed to meet with the chairs of the boards of each of the three community hospitals this evening. That is a sign of good faith from him, and I recognise that. However, it is now important that we get down and actually recognise the importance of these hospitals.

Moonta is part of a growing community. The Moonta/Moonta Bay/Port Hughes/Kadina/Wallaroo area is growing exponentially; it has something like a 3 per cent population growth that is not predicted to slow down. There is going to be an enormous number of people move in. The Wallaroo hospital will have challenges certainly now and going into the future in servicing the needs of that expanding community, which is why ensuring that Moonta hospital remains cannot be overstated.

Moonta has an arrangement in place—and has had an arrangement in place for over 15 years, I believe—whereby a payment is made by the public hospital health system for these eight long-stay beds that the minister has referred to in some of his answers today. The cost of that is \$120.05. In any way of looking at this, this must be the cheapest access to a publicly-funded bed that the minister can ever organise. It seems amazing to me that a service that cost some \$288,000 last year for an occupancy rate, on average, of about 6.3 beds per night is not continuing.

It has to be reviewed and we have to make people understand this. Unfortunately, it is the people who sit to your right, Madam Deputy Speaker, who have the influence, but the community is going to keep fighting. The demonstration of emotion that was witnessed out the front today really gives heart to all of us, because it shows that people will not give up that fight. These people travelled for hours to be there. Many are working people who probably gave up a day's pay to make sure they could be there to support their hospital.

For instance, the Ardrossan hospital is some 96 years old. It employs 56 people. It is the biggest employer in the town. I know when the Hon. Michael O'Brien visited the Goyder electorate a few weeks ago, we went to Cheetham Salt at Price. At the end of the briefing about the salt operations, the manager of that firm emphasised to minister O'Brien the important role that the Ardrossan hospital plays in his business, which employs 80 people in an adjoining small town. It is the domino effect of all these decisions that really needs to bring about a change of heart and a commitment of dollars going forward into the future.

As part of the answer to the question I asked about Mr Lennox, the Minister for Health referred to comments from Belinda Jarvis, who is the EODON of the Ardrossan Community Hospital. I emphasise that word 'community'. Ms Jarvis has confirmed with me, yes, the Ardrossan hospital will still be open in June of 2011, but it is the year going beyond that that presents the great dilemma for them.

The community is committed to it. An amount \$140,000 does make an enormous difference. It is part of the business plan which was determined four years ago and which was funded by the minister to ensure that the hospital had a financial future, and that is the commitment that it needs. In the scheme of things, the multiplier effect of all these dollars in a \$4.5 billion budget for health cannot be overstated.

These communities will continue to fight. I know they intend to engage with people who have any connection either with them or the communities these hospitals serve to ensure that as many people as possible within the metropolitan area understand the importance of the Keith, Moonta and Ardrossan hospitals and that they, in turn, put pressure upon the government to reverse its decision.