

Tumut Health Facilities

Press reports

'Our hospital worse than Henty's discard' - Adelong Batlow MPS chairperson Janice Vanzella. MPS delay continues to frustrate Committee

AN old building which once served as Henty's hospital prior to the building of the Henty Multi Purpose Health Service (MPS) remains in better condition than the Batlow hospital, according to the chairperson of the Adelong Batlow MPS Committee.

Smarting over delays in State Government funding approval for a new Batlow MPS, construction on which at one stage was expected to begin back in 2004, the MPS committee will today impress on the Chief Executive of the newly merged Greater Southern Health Service, Associate Professor Stuart Schneider, the deteriorating condition of the existing hospital building when he visits Adelong and Batlow.

'It's in an appalling state,' said MPS chairperson Janice Vanzella.

"The back of the old section of the hospital is badly weathered and hasn't been painted in at least 15 years or more. A section of asbestos has paint peeling off, and here we still have an old wooden framed building built back in the forties during an era when they built out of whatever materials they could gather together.

"The time for a new facility is long, long overdue. "Henty has its new MPS, but the old Henty hospital is still 100% better than what we have here in Batlow at present. "

It seems the old section is not the only area where problems exist. A fortnight ago an 80 year old man with dementia fell three metres from a window at the Batlow Hospital after putting his hand on a flyscreen over the open window to steady himself, and it gave way.

Hospital staff were reported to be most distressed about the incident in which the man suffered cuts bruises and suspected broken ribs.

The shortcomings and lack of maintenance at the hospital will be one of the major thing on the agenda for Assoc. Prof. Schneider when he tours the building today at the invitation of the MPS committee.

Prof Schneider will be invited to carry out both an external and internal tour of the existing Hospital.

He will also be inspecting the Batlow Railway land which has been identified as the preferred site for the new MPS, if and when it finally gets built.

The committee will no doubt be taking the opportunity to impress on Prof Schneider the urgent need for his support in having the government commit funds, and its own dismay over the setback announced in December after the Government was told the project could cost \$ 10 million, nearly twice that estimated two years earlier.

Back in 2003 the MPS committee was informed paperwork for involvement by both the federal and state governments was virtually complete and construction was anticipated throughout 2004.

That didn't eventuate, but up until late last year the MPS committee had been fully expectant that plans would go on display over Christmas week, and the new building would be constructed next year.

It was anticipated that a Value Management Study would be set for early in the new year, quickly followed have final design and then construction .

Sadly however, December saw confirmation that with cost projections having blown out to around \$10 million the project had to be referred back by NSW Health to State Treasury.

A short statement issued at the time by NSW Health and the (former) GMAHS referred to 'delays due to the lack of available funds from the NSW Government.'

It also indicated no date had been set for the public display of information about the proposed sites for the MPS, although the committee is known to favour the railway land as a "greenfields' site.

At the time members of the committee expressed grave disappointment over the funding delay, vowing to contact both State and Federal M.P.s in a bid to impress upon NSW Health the urgency for the project to proceed.

Since then State Member for Burrinjuck Katrina Hodgkinson has

called on the government to fund the project as a matter of urgency.

"The community of Batlow has invested too much time and effort in furthering this project to accept these continuing delays," said Ms Hodgkinson.

"This new delay is simply unacceptable," she said, adding she had again made strong representations to both the Minister for Health and the Area Health Service on behalf of the MPS committee.

"The Minister must explain why he is continuing to allow these delays to occur when there is already a desperate need for upgraded facilities in Batlow," said Ms Hodgkinson, "and he must also explain why he has apparently made insufficient financial allocation for this important project."

MPS chairperson Janice Vanzella said despite assurances that NSW Health remained fully committed to the project, there were now growing fears in Batlow and Adelong that the MPS may be delayed indefinitely.

"We have no dates and I can't see it happening before 2006, and only then if we're lucky.

"It's unacceptable given anew Batlow MPS was signed off two years ago.

"Why has the government not bothered to see this through to fruition given the urgent need.

"It has already been documented in the local press that the Shire is short of aged care beds, and that its aged population is expected to double by 2030."

The proposed MPS plan is for a 24 bed facility with five acute beds and 19 residential aged care places. The latter will include eight high care beds, one respite bed, and a ten bed hostel.

Tumut & Adelong Times
March 1, 2005

'MPS is coming, but I'm not sure when' health chief tells Batlow committee.

A new Multi-Purpose Service (MPS) for Batlow is coming, but residents are still none the wiser as to exactly when the new facility will be built following a visit to the town this week by the Southern Area Health chief executive.

Professor Stewart Shneider was in Batlow on Tuesday to tour the existing run-down hospital and meet with the Batlow Multi Purpose Service committee to discuss the beleaguered project.

The MPS has been subject to continual delays since then Minister for Health Craig Knowles announced funding for the project back in March 200.

Originally slated to be opened in July 2003, the \$10 million project is yet to progress past the design phase, to the immense frustration of Batlow residents.

Mr Schneider made all the right noises during Tuesday's tour, saying the project was high on the Southern Area Health Service's list of priorities.

But he could not say why the project had been delayed, nor could he shed light on when funding would come through.

However, he did pledge to chase up the government and provide an answer as to funding availability.

"I've given a commitment to the committee to provide them with a time line for the project by the end of March," Prof. Schneider said.

"The community feel they don't know really know what's going on at the moment and I can understand that."

Mr Schneider conceded the present hospital was not in an ideal condition, but noted it was important not to rush into building the new facility.

"Projects like this only happen about once every 50 years in rural communities, so it is important we get it right," Mr Schneider said.

"Batlow certainly has a case for a new facility, that was made evident during my trip to the hospital."

That point was reiterated by Batlow MPS chairperson Janice Vanzella.

"I think he was surprised at just how bad the physical state of the hospital was," Ms Vanzella said.

"Greater Murray Health have always given this project their support and Professor Schneider said that would continue under Southern Area Health.

"It's now a case of continuing to put pressure on the government to speed up the process ultimately it's their decision."

Ms Vanzella remains confident the project will get the green light from the government.

The state government pulled the plug on expected funding for the project in December, when a planning document indicated the cost of the project would be double the original estimate of \$5 million.

The budget blow out for the 24-bed facility - which includes 19 aged care beds - meant the project had to be taken back to the NSW State Treasury to find the extra funds.

There is no word on whether the treasury has allocated those extra funds, but Mr Schneider has indicated he'll have an answer for the Batlow MPS committee by the end of March.

Tumut & Adelong Times
March 4 2005

Minister urged to progress MPS

The continuing delay in progressing the Batlow-Adelong Multi Purpose Service (MPS) health facility has resulted in Member for Burrinjuck Katrina Hodgkinson again taking the matter to NSW Health Minister Maurice Lemma.

Ms Hodgkinson's latest representations have expressed concern that on every occasion she had previously met with or written to the Minister about the Batlow MPS being accorded priority she had received a reassurance from either Mr Lemma or the CEO of Greater Southern Area Health Service, only to have further delays come to light.

Minister's attention to the fact, as previously outlined in the Times, that the building that was replaced by the new Henty MPS is in significantly better repair than the existing Batlow hospital building.

Ms Hodgkinson has called on the Minister to ensure some "real and demonstrable progress" on the Batlow MPS was achieved- "in the very near future."

Five years ago the residents of Batlow and Adelong were told Two Adelong residents they could expect development of the Batlow MPS in 2002/03. Today they are still waiting.

Key milestones in the long battle seeking a replacement for the Batlow hospital have been:

AUGUST 1997: The Batlow Development League sets up a

sub committee to develop a submission for Batlow Hospital to become an MPS.

JULY 14, 1998: Public meetings were held in Adelong to enlist support from the Adelong Progress Association for development of an Adelong/Batlow MPS. Two Adelong residents join the Batlow Development League MPS Working Party.

OCTOBER 8, 1998: Submission prepared by working party presented in Sydney to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services.

OCTOBER 13, 1999: Public meeting held to show support for MPS to the NSW Ministerial Advisory Committee on Health in smaller towns chaired by Ian Sinclair.

MARCH 2000: Announcement by Minister for Health Craig Knowles that the Government has set aside money for the development of an MPS in Batlow in the 2002/03 financial year.

APRIL 2001: Adelong/Batlow MPS Consultative Committee appointed. Work commences on development of the Service Plan.

JANUARY 2003: SHRIST Programme that deals with the redevelopment of small rural hospitals is revised by the State Government. A new date for building is now given as 2004/05.

APRIL 2004: revision of last date given. New date issued 2006/07.

DECEMBER 2004: Department of health fails to sign off on newly completed draft Value Management Study. Decides to review the whole of its Rural Health Programme. MPS Consultative Committee now uncertain about building date because of this new delay.

MARCH 2005: Newly appointed CEO of the Greater Southern Area health Service, Associate Professor Stuart Schneider visits Batlow and Adelong Health Services in response to an invitation from the MPS Consultative Committee. Residents still none the wiser as to when the new facility will be built, with the CEO promising to provide the committee with a time line for the project by the end of March.

Tumut & Adelong Times
March 18, 2005

Tumut health service planning review gains momentum.

A new health committee with 13 members representing local health professionals and a broad cross section of community residents has now completed their first two meetings.

The first meeting held on March 1 verified the membership of the committee as a result of applications received to join the Health Service Planning Committee. The newly elected Chairperson, Allan Tonkin, welcomed the new members and the Manager of Service and Planning for Greater Southern Health Service, Janet Chapman provided an overview of the project.

Ms Chapman outlined the proposed review and spoke at length regarding its aims and objectives.

The time frame for the review to be completed by the end of September 2005 will coincide with a broader plan encompassing the new health service.

The second meeting held on the April 7 began the complex task of preparing the planning review' documentation.

A copy of the required format was provided and the committee began the task of allocating numerous research projects among themselves and other experts within the shire.

The primary purpose of the review is to provide an objective summary of all of the variables that effect the provision of health services throughout the entire shire.

The committee stressed that they will be working in conjunction with other health related groups and expects a cross-fertilisation of ideas and information. Over the next two months, more work will be done to complete the draft review, which will then go out for public consultation towards the end of June with public meetings being planned for August 2005.

The next meeting of the Health Service Planning Committee is planned for Thursday and it is expected that numerous progress reports will be consolidated into the evolving health services plan.

The committee will provide regular media releases to ensure that the communities are kept informed of the progress with the plan.

Any people interested in discussing the planning process are

invited to contact Janet Chapman on 6023 7100 or Allan Tonkin on 6941 2512.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, May 3

More planning funds, but no sign of MPS start

The Batlow Adelong multi-purpose health service (MPS) has been allocated half a million dollars in the State Budget, but there is widespread disappointment construction won't take place in 2005/06 nor in all likelihood during the following year.

The funds allocated this year are expected to be spent on finalising, the Value Management Study, a process which appeared to be well advanced up until last December when planning for the project came to a grinding halt.

That coincided with the release of a document indicating the cost of the project would be double the original estimate of \$5 million, with the matter referred back to State Treasury for further consideration.

The Value Management Study (VMS) is expected to settle on a site and design for the health facility, and hopefully see the release of final plans.

Last year NSW Health, in conjunction with the local MPS committee, appeared to have settled on the Batlow railway land site, being looked at as a greenfields location for a brand new building, as the preferred option.

However it now appears the government and NSW Health want to look at a number of other options once again.

MPS committee chairperson Janice Vanzella, told the Times she was not overly surprised that funds for the project in this year's Budget were limited to planning matters rather than construction.

"When planning stopped late last year there was still some work to be done and it was pretty obvious at that point there was no way construction would begin this year; it was simply too big a job to be done in the time remaining prior to the Budget,' she said.

"All of which is very disappointing for members of the committee who have been working very hard in the interim in a bid to further impress the government of the urgent need for this project.

"We assume the \$500,000 is for completion of the Value Management Study, but have idea exactly how it will be spent.

"In some respect it appears to be a case of revisiting what we did last year, but in greater detail; it means there is still a job ahead of the committee which at its last meeting had resolved not to meet again until it had something to do."

The proposal for the MPS is for a 24 bed facility with five acute beds and 19 residential aged care places. The latter section would include eight high care beds, one respite, and a 10 bed hostel.

National Party Member for Burrinjuck, Katrina Hodgkinson, said the budget was a cruel blow for those many local residents who had been working hard to provide adequate public health services for Batlow.

"The Batlow MPS was originally supposed to be opened in July 2003, yet successive Labor Budgets have completely failed to allocate the necessary funding," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"In the meantime Batlow Hospital staff are continuing to struggle with a ramshackle fibro building that is in worse condition than other hospital buildings that have already been decommissioned.

"I have strongly supported the Batlow MPS for the past six years, yet the Car Labor government has consistently failed to make good on their promises to the people of Batlow.

"The Carr Government has presided over area health services in southern NSW that are poorly managed, unresponsive to community concerns, unable to meet their debts and so blind that they don't understand that there is a problem.

"For more than ten years the residents of the Tumut region have been taxed to the hilt by the Sydney-centric Labor government and it's high time to give something back."

She said that without major funding from the latest Budget an opening date of 2006/07 would be virtually unachievable.

In 2000 when the MPS was being strongly mooted, the government indicated it was budgeting for a number of such facilities in the State, and that Batlow could expect its MPS to proceed in 2002/03 along

with other towns such as Junee and Berrigan.

As long ago as 1999 when the committee headed by Ian Sinclair conducted its tour around the state investigating the state of rural health facilities he indicated Batlow should be one of the first to be completed.

Yet the Batlow MPS has continued to suffer progressive delays, often the result of the many planning steps involved being spread over two financial years and Budget allocations - as has now happened with the Value Management Study.

"It has been dragging on far too long which is very upsetting and disappointing," said Janice Vanzella.

"We had been told the quest for an MPS had to be community driven, and that is exactly what this has been from the word go. Yet we still seem to be quite a way off getting it to fruition.

Tumut & Adelong Times
May 27, 2005

Hospital services cutback.

Anaesthetist's departure to impact on obstetrics and emergency surgery.

Hospital services in Tumut will be dramatically reduced as a result of the only practicing anaesthetist in the shire moving to Gundagai. Obstetrics and emergency surgery services at the hospital are expected to suffer most and patients needing to access these services will most likely be referred to Wagga Base Hospital.

Health Service Manager Mary Smit at the Tumut District Hospital said there will be a reduction for a time in the services the hospital can provide while an anaesthetist is not in town.

However, Mrs Smit said the health community of Tumut is actively seeking a new anaesthetist.

Dr Paul Beiboer, who until yesterday was Tumut's emergency anaesthetist, will only be available for scheduled surgery until the end of the year.

While obstetrics and emergency surgery services are expected to be the areas most affected, the hospital may also be required to limit the type of maternity patients it can take.

Women expecting births over the coming months are encouraged

to seek advice from their GP obstetrician.

Obstetricians Dr Yates and Dr Wilson will also be available to guide decisions on whether a child can be delivered in Tumut.

Mrs Smit said that the anaesthetist will be available some days and if a delivery does need to be made at Wagga Base Hospital, mothers will be able to transfer back to Tumut Hospital for postnatal care almost immediately following the birth of the baby.

The issue of an anaesthetist has highlighted the need for more doctors in Tumut.

According to Janette Watson from the Tumut Family Medical Centre over the last three years the number of equivalent full-time doctors in Tumut has almost halved.

Ms Watson said she is very concerned about attracting more doctors to Tumut and said their practice has been actively seeking doctors for two years without success.

"Tumut will be in big trouble if we can't get doctors, I can't stress that enough," said Ms Watson.

Tumut Shire Council general manager Chris Adams said that Council was supporting the search for doctors by providing promotional material about the town and helping to facilitate the recruitment in whatever way they could.

Mrs Smit said Tumut was not unique in its search for more doctors.

"This is a nationwide problem it is happening everywhere," said Mrs Smit.

Maria Haider from Tumut Medical Practice said they had recently employed a young doctor who was planning to study anaesthetics.

Dr Fred Latif arrived in Tumut in March and according to Mrs Haider loves the town and is planning to stay.

If Dr Latif did commit to anaesthetics training, it would take one year full time or two years part time to complete.

With a committee currently working on developing plans for a new hospital and health service provision in Tumut, it is an ideal time to include incentives for prospective medical staff.

There is the possibility for a community action group being

formed to develop strategies that will attract qualified staff in the area of health to this region.

Tumut Shire is a growth area and along with the proposed second stage development of the Visy Pulp and Paper Mill, it is considered vital a suitably qualified GP anaesthetist be sourced to take up a position at one of the local medical practises.

"Tumut Shire residents can assist the process of attracting staff to the area by talking about the benefits of living in this beautiful region to any potential suitably qualified health professional" said Mrs Smit.

For further information about either the community action group, or proposed changes to services at Tumut Hospital, people are asked to contact Health Service Manager Mary Smit at the Tumut Hospital.

Patients with concerns should speak to their doctors and be assured their health and well being will always be the main priority.

Tumut & Adelong Times
Friday, June 3, 2005

Batlow MPS, 'I'll believe it when I see it' says Hodgkinson.

The Nationals' Member for Burrinjuck. Katrina Hodgkinson, said today that she would believe the promised funding for the Batlow MPS when she could see it as a line item in the NSW Capital Works Budget Papers.

"While I welcome the promise by the NSW Minister for Health, to Tumut Councillors, to provide \$7million over the next three years to build 'the MPS, it remains little more than that - a Carr Labor Government promise," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"Before getting too excited about the MPS funding residents of Tumut should recall the Carr Labor Government's promise that there would be no forced amalgamations of local government areas."

"Or their promise to open the Batlow MPS by July 2003!"

Ms Hodgkinson said she was becoming increasingly wary about welcoming promises by the Carr Labor Government, because they were rarely delivered on time, if at all.

The Local MP said it could not be taken as gratis that the Batlow MPS was a 'sure thing' just because of the Minister for Health's latest statement.

"Already the Minister's statement indicates that the completion of the Batlow MPS will not be achievable by 2007, a date that he committed to in the NSW Parliament on 1 September 2004," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"The Minister for Health's latest statement is clearly no more than an attempt to disguise further delays in this important project."

I have and will continue to push the Carr Labor Government to progress the Batlow MPS as a matter of urgency.

"The residents of Batlow have already had too many delays foisted on them by the Carr Labor Government," Ms Hodgkinson said.

Tumut & Adelong Times
Tuesday, June 21, 2005

Planning for Tumut's future health services.

The planning process is well underway for the development of a Health Service Plan for Tumut with members of community urged to be involved with upcoming community consultation meetings to be held over the next month.

Representatives from various groups within the community have been invited to take part in the second stage of the plan development with all members of the community welcome to attend the open public meeting to be held next month.

The first series of meetings will be held this Thursday, August 4, with one to be held at the Brungle Health Service Centre at 11 a.m. That session will be followed by two sessions at Tumut's HACC building, one for families at 12.30 p.m and the second with representatives from seniors within the community at 3.30 p.m.

Thursday will also see a meeting of the steering committee at 5 p.m. prior to a breakfast meeting with health service providers at 7.30 a.m on Friday morning.

Members of the steering committee will also meet with representatives of the Health Council as well as Tumut hospital staff and members of the hospital auxiliary on Friday morning.

The main objective of the Health Service Plan is to review current health services in the short term in order to develop a plan that will meet the needs of Tumut's local

government area (LGA) in the years to come.

It is envisaged the plan will ultimately provide a framework that will guide service development, facility planning, workforce development and IT/asset planning.

Organisers say it is vital the community be actively involved in the development of the plan, and as such the community consultation workshops will play an integral role in enabling them to contribute.

Members of the Health Plan Steering Committee have diverse backgrounds and represent the wider community in general.

The committee has members representing all stakeholders including Greater Southern Area Health, Tumut Shire Council and the local community.

Committee members include Janet Chapman, Manager Planning Greater Southern Area Health Service, Mary Smit, Tumut Hospital Health Service Manager and Jill Ludford Health Service Manager Community Health as well as Isobel Craine, Rhonda Blunt, Louise Murphy, Daphne Clarke, Trina Thomson, Chris Adams and Allan Tonkin.

The committee was formed in March this year following public nominations in February.

To date the committee has compiled extensive data relating to the current and projected needs of this community in relation to the types of health related services.

Information has been collated for many issues related to the provision of health service from existing staffing for Tumut's Health Service through to the distance and travelling times between the major centres in Tumut Shire as well as to Gundagai, Wagga Wagga, Canberra and Sydney.

Information has also been collated outlining the demographic profile of Tumut Local Government Area, age and gender profile, the indigenous population, multicultural population and population growth as well as population projections.

Ageing is another area that has been looked at closely as has the socioeconomic profile of the region.

The health of the population has also been included in the study with a breakdown of mortality trends and hospitalisation admissions within Tumut's LGA.

To date a draft Health Service Plan has been prepared utilising information specifically relating to this area.

"It is now time to finetune the plan as a way of preparing a sound base for the development and establishment of future services and infrastructure in this region," a spokesperson said.

Apart from the series of consultations held with representatives from sections of the community over the next week, an open public meeting will be held in September to which all members of the general public are encouraged to attend.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, August 2

First draft of Health Service Plan compiled.

The Health Service Plan currently being developed for the Tumut Local Government Area (LGA) has had extensive input from various sections of the community, with a first draft being prepared for an open public meeting to be held next month.

The plan received further input last week from a series of consultations held with various community representatives.

Apart from youth, seniors, families, indigenous, health council and Tumut hospital staff and auxiliary, members of the committee also met with a number of health service and emergency care providers.

Mr Allan Tonkin is Chairman of the local steering committee while Ms Janet Chapman is working through the process with the committee in her position as Manager Planning with Greater Southern Area Health Service.

A breakfast meeting held last Friday saw members of the Health Service Planning Committee meet with a number of local clinicians to hear first hand what they believe are some of the priorities for a future local health service.

The meeting saw representatives, not only from medical practices, but also physiotherapists, dentists, police, ambulance, pathologists, radiographers, pharmacists and community health workers.

The overall aim of the plan is to develop an overview of current ser-

vices as well as looking to the future and ways to provide an innovative and forward thinking health service and management plan.

The plan also makes recommendations in relation to dealing with short, medium and long-term issues within the local health service.

While there were many issues raised that impact directly on the level of service provided to residents within the Tumut LGA, one of the most significant points made was in relation to attracting and retaining service professionals.

It was pointed out that regardless of how good the facilities are, there will always be the difficulty of attracting as and retaining health service providers, one participant stating, "facilities are of no use if there are not the staff to utilise them".

The initial draft document has been prepared based on official statistics pertaining to various sections within the document as well through consultation with various community groups.

The draft document will be the basis for the general public meeting to be held next month, with all members of Tumut's LGA being encouraged to be actively involved in the process of determining their future Health Service.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, August 12

GSAHS chief visits Tumut.

Greater Southern Area Health Service Chief Executive, Stuart Schneider, visited the Tumut Hospital yesterday (Monday) as part of a tour of health services in the greater southern area.

In his first visit to the Tumut Hospital, Mr Schneider met with staff from Tumut Hospital and Tumut Community Health Services.

Mr Schneider was in Tumut in December and visited the Community Health facilities however did not have time then to tour the Hospital.

Mr Schneider acknowledged that Tumut Hospital is a very important facility for the area, especially in terms of obstetrics and surgery and says he is looking forward to its redevelopment following completion of the Tumut Health Services Plan.

He said the Tumut Health

Services Plan, which is still in the community consultation stage, is very important for the area and a public meeting on the matter will be held later in the year.

Mr Schneider also said GSAHS is committed to the Adelong/Batlow Multi-Purpose Service, and is looking forward to work on the building commencing.

"The Batlow MPS is going step-by-step," Mr Schneider said, "but it will definitely happen."

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, August 16

Sir, - In the last edition of your paper (Fri 2.9.05) I drew attention to the cost and lack of access to ultrasound services for Tumut people.

Following my letter, there was some suggestion that perhaps Medicare rules were the problem. Was there a different set of rules for radiology clinics than for doctors' surgeries?

According to Medicare sources, the answer is "No". The decision to demand full fees up front and the refusal to bulk bill anyone, including pensioners, is a commercial decision by the private radiology company. That is their right as a private enterprise.

For low income earners living in this district, however, public health offers no viable alternative. The public health service in this part of the country does not at present provide an adequate radiology service.

At some time in the near future, hopefully, there will be an ultrasound machine at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. Our thanks to whoever is responsible for that decision. However, it does not solve Tumut's problem, or that of other towns who also do not have adequate access to ultrasound. Imagine the queues!

We need modern facilities where we live. The technology is now available. It is being used in WA out of Perth to remote locations. Let's have it here in the Riverina and SW Slopes.

Yours etc. Sue Swann, PO Box
132, Tumut, 2720
Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, September 5

'It doesn't make sense

Could someone please explain to me why Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, the largest inland city in NSW, has been without an ultrasound machine for years?

Why has it been acceptable to have inpatients ferried across the road by car to the private radiology clinic for ultrasound and other radiology? Why have pensioners and low income earners been denied bulk billing for ultrasound and asked to pay the full fee, (in most cases hundreds of dollars), up front?

Why do patients have to travel hundreds of kilometres from surrounding towns to access this basic diagnostic treatment?

And last but not least, why have the people of the Wagga Wagga region meekly accepted this situation?

Sue Swann, Tumut
The Daily Advertiser,
Wagga Wagga
2005, September 5

New Equipment for Wagga Base Hospital, Ultrasound to come. Hospital to finally receive \$300,000 ultrasound machine.

Wagga Base Hospital is to receive a \$300,000 ultrasound machine within the next three months.

Director of Clinical Operations at Greater Southern Area Health Service, Dr Joe McGirr, yesterday said the hospital was in need of the medical equipment and would be receiving a machine shortly.

Patients at Wagga Base are currently required to go across the road to a private imaging group to undergo ultrasounds, a situation which Dr McGirr agrees is not ideal.

"We agree the Wagga Base Hospital needs an ultrasound machine and we've been successful in obtaining the funding to get that," Dr McGirr said. "There is no doubt the hospital should have an ultrasound machine so we've taken the steps to get one. "We have put an order in and there will be an ultrasound machine at Wagga Base in the next three months."

Dr McGirr said a letter published in The Daily Advertiser yesterday raised a "very valuable point" that Wagga, being the largest inland city in NSW should have such equipment at its hospital. "It's a fair point," he said. "It's a much-needed

upgrade and it will mean patients won't have to travel across the road (anymore). "We've got the money, we've ordered it, it's coming."

The Daily Advertiser, Wagga Wagga
2005, September 6

Top medical job

My son was felled in a pretty ordinary two-man tackle involving knees at a football game on Saturday which left him on the ground reeling in agony.

After regaining his wind in the sheds it was quite obvious he had a more severe injury.

My reason for writing this letter is to thank the very nice and very efficient nursing staff, a young doctor (Dr Jason Bendall), and the Wollundry Rotary Club.

After they quickly got the pain under control and the physical examination done, the doctor left and came back with a radiologist and an ultrasound machine - which--was the device required to confirm, or to clear, fears of serious organ damage.

To my surprise, this very important casualty device was donated by the Wollundry Rotary Club.

Due to the great medics, the Wollundry Rotary Club, and an X-ray machine, my son was on his way home inside three hours from when the accident occurred. He is nursing a broken rib.

I was speaking to the father of a Brothers junior footballer who was involved in a nasty accidental head knock last Wednesday week at training. He was also praising the Wagga Base Hospital casualty department and the doctors.

**Jack Petersen, Wagga
The Daily Advertiser,
Wagga Wagga
2005, September 8**

'Open the door on health'

Further calls for upgrading of our hospital's services.

As the push for expanded health services at the Tumut Hospital continues to gather momentum, Tumut shire's general manger Chris Adams has urged concerned members of the public to attend a public meeting on September 22 to help determine a suitable level of service.

That meeting, called to review

the first draft of a health services plan for the hospital, is expected to be attended by the CEO of the Greater Southern Area Health Service, Stuart Schneider.

Also present will be members of the community committee that has been working on the plan in conjunction with the GSAHS.

The meeting is set down for the 22nd at the RSL Club from 5.30 p.m. to 7 p.m. with the public being asked to review the initial draft of the plan, and comment on whether they consider it appropriate or whether there are deficiencies.

The urgent need for the provision of modern ultrasound equipment, and associated bulk billing, an issue addressed on the front page of this newspaper, is expected to be one of the matters discussed and according to Mr Adams is exactly the sort of thing on which input is needed from the public.

"While the plan will be used in the design of a new hospital it will also be used to upgrade the existing hospital where there are problems with the current level of service, as it could be another ten years before construction funding is available for a new building," said Mr Adams

"The situation regarding the provision of ultrasound services has been discussed, and there is a general recognition that the current service, while valuable, is too costly for many of the patients from the Shire to access."

Local medical practice managers have confirmed a long list of problems encountered over time where patients have to have ultrasounds, CT scans, breast imaging, MRI etc.

According to one of them, Maria Haider, any ultrasounds currently carried out in Tumut are limited as the machinery is not of a sufficient standard to do most checks.

Ms Haider said travelling to Wagga usually meant elderly members of the local community having to incur an extra cost of \$50 or the driver's costs, and mammography I ultrasound costs were "much more expensive in our region than in the ACT or Albury to start off with."

She says patients that must have breast imaging would sooner go to Albury or to Canberra where if requested by a doctor they would be

bulk billed.

In the case of Wagga the cost of ultrasound/MRI had to be paid for up front before the patient could go to a Medicare office for reimbursement.

"Due to the severity of these problems patients in need of these services are closing the door on their health due to the financial 'out of reach' costs that are involved," she said.

Tumut Shire Mayor, Gene Vanzella said he hoped there would be a big attendance at the forthcoming meeting.

"The council certainly supports the principle of establishing Tumut as a centre for medical imaging, rather than people having to travel to Wagga, Albury or Canberra," he said.

"We are fast becoming a regional support centre for other centres such as Tumbarumba and Gundagai, and I am sure citizens of those towns would prefer to come to Tumut and drive back home rather than embark on much longer journeys."

Cr Vanzella said whilst Batlow was still hanging out for the additional \$2.8 to \$3 million from the State government to enable a \$10 million Batlow Multi Purpose service (MPS) to be built to the standard and capacity necessary, it was also essential to keep the need for a replacement of the Tumut Hospital before the eyes of the GSAHS and the government.

"It is a hotchpotch of bits and pieces, a very antiquated facility that must be replaced, particularly given the area's burgeoning timber industries."

One of the proponents of expanded services, including new ultrasound equipment and bulk billing provision, Sue Swann, has also agreed there is a desperate need for a new hospital in Tumut designed for the 21st century.

"Batlow's hospital is even worse, but the Tumut hospital is now over 100 years old and has been renovated several times since the 1980s," she said.

"The staff are dedicated and hardworking, however they find it difficult to administer modern medicine in a building which has gone long past its use by date.

"Community groups work tirelessly to provide equipment and accessories to make life more

comfortable for patients. The palliative care room is a credit to all those who have contributed to it.

"The electronic beds provided by local donors and by the hospital auxiliary are much needed, but should be a standard item.

"There is no isolation ward in Tumut hospital. With superbugs on the rise in rural areas including this community, this presents a dangerous problem, especially with multi-bed wards which are too small."

Ms Swann said whilst Tumut had attracted big industry in the likes of Visy, Carter Holt Harvey and Weyerhaeuser and was recognised as a growth area, the state and federal governments had failed to provide hospitals and health services to match the levels to which the communities of the shire had been raised.

"It is downright embarrassing to have hundreds of leading scientists and engineers come to Tumut each year from all over the world, booking out all accommodation from here to Wagga, and yet offer such a run-down health system." she said.

"I hope the people of Tumut and district turn out in droves to the public meeting on September 22 as it will be a measure of how deeply the community feels about the need for upgraded health services, including the need for a new hospital.

"If as many people attend as turned up for the Telstra phone tower meeting, and speak with the same kind of passion, things might turn out very different to the current situation in which we find ourselves and that of the hospital and the services it provides."

Ms Swann said the announcement this week that a \$300,000 ultrasound machine would now be supplied to the Wagga Base Hospital was excellent news, and followed the recent purchase by Wagga Rotary Club of an ultrasound worth \$60,000 for the Wagga Base accident and emergency department, funded from the proceeds of its market days.

"This will undoubtedly help alleviate the necessity of having in-patients transported to other locations in Wagga for ultrasound examinations.

"However this does not solve the

problems Tumut district residents have in accessing and affording ultrasound, nor that of other shires in the region who have to currently travel to Wagga for radiology.

"The federal government should take some of the responsibility for the initial cost of changing over to new technology of the type in use in W.A. to overcome the problems associated with distances between population centres.

"NSW, which also has population centres scattered over large geographic areas, is currently using road couriers to transport X ray film.

"The Howard government has promised over \$1 billion for a schools program, has already spent an unplanned \$300 million on sending a small contingent of troops to Iraq and has then spent another few hundred million for further troops.

"Imagine what \$2 billion would buy for country areas in terms of health services."

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, September 9

EDITORIAL New symptom of poor public health

THE good news is that, at last, Wagga Base Hospital will have an ultrasound machine of its own and patients will not be required to go to a private institution for ultrasound testing.

The bad news is that this situation is an example of the utterly deplorable state of the public health system in NSW.

Although the Labor state government must take responsibility for the current state of affairs, the start of the decline of facilities and staffing levels within the public health system goes back further.

The fact that a base hospital in the biggest inland city in the state has not yet received what is a basic but essential piece of equipment like an ultrasound machine is a clear indication of the government's attitude to public health. This is, as the director of clinical operations at Greater Southern Area Health Service,

Dr Joe McGirr, said this week, a "very valuable point".

The Wagga situation emphasises the decline in political attitudes about ensuring public health is adequately catered for.

This biased attitude to local health services should be of great concern to those who live in every regional city and town.

In recent months at least three Labor state premiers have raised the theory about the federal government taking over health care. Rather surprisingly this has received the cold

shoulder from the Prime Minister and Health Minister, Tony Abbott.

There is nothing to suggest from this lack of interest that a coalition government is likely to be any more willing and effective in ensuring the public health system gets its fair share of attention.

Why indeed, as a DA correspondent asked this week, should people in smaller centres be required to travel to a city some hundreds of kilometres away to have the basic diagnostic treatment provided by an ultrasound machine?

The Daily Advertiser,
Wagga Wagga
2005, September 9

What price on health care?

SIR, - I am writing in response to the article published and letter written by Sue Swann in a recent edition of the Tumut & Adelong Times.

As a Tumut resident and a patient that has used the facilities of Regional Imaging on many occasions I would like to say that I disagree with Ms Swann's view of the company.

I do agree with her views of the public system and agree that more facilities should be made available for the public patients of our region. This is not the fault of Regional Imaging, they are instead doing us a favour by providing us with the services that they do.

Regional Imaging is a private practice and comes to the Tumut Hospital on a weekly basis to provide a service that we as Tumut and surrounding residents should appreciate. The staff of Regional Imaging provide a friendly service and results are given as soon as they can possibly be given, in an urgent case I was able to have access to results on the same day within a matter of hours.

They are a Private Practice thus allowing them to charge over and above the scheduled fee. Just as the

General Practitioners, Specialists and other Health Care providers that charge over and above the scheduled Medicare fees.

Who puts a price on their health care? If you require specialised health care you pay for it. It's the way our health care system operates. Until the government provides us access to better equipped public health care facilities within the Riverina we should be saying thank you to Regional Imaging for providing us with the services that our Hospitals don't.

Yours etc. (Name and address withheld)

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, September 16

Meeting deserves strong attendance.

Sir, - In recent issues of the T. & A. Times there have been several articles on our Tumut Hospital and its deficiencies. It is to be hoped most subscribers have read the articles and discussed their contents with family and friends.

A good hospital and good educational facilities are the two most important institutions a community can have.

Our priority should be a new hospital which we desperately need and we should get behind our new Tumut hospital committee to see this is secured.

However, in the meantime we want to see our present hospital, has all the modern technology and appropriate staff to see our community receives quality treatment. To ensure this the support of the community and our medical practitioners is required.

A draft service plan for Tumut Health Service (hospital) has been prepared and copies can be picked up from the hospital, Tumut shire Council office and all Shire libraries.

The health service planning committee of the Tumut Shire and Greater Southern Area Health Service have organised an important meeting for this Thursday, September 22, at 5.30 p.m. in the Tumut RSL Club.

Your health and that of your families could be affected by the outcome of this meeting so it is very urgent that you attend.

It would be wonderful if one member from each family group

could be represented - don't let inclement weather deter you.

Yours etc. Pat Webb
Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, September 20

Health Forum Thursday

The draft Service Plan for the Tumut Health Service will be the subject of a public forum on Thursday night, with health authorities and the local council calling for a strong attendance from members of the local community at a forum regarded as vital to future health services in the district.

The meeting will be held at the Tumut RSL Club auditorium from 5.30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

A number of recommendations are to be presented following an explanation of the process of preparing the draft plan, with the public being urged to comment on its appropriateness, and any perceived deficiencies.

It is hoped the CEO of the Greater Southern Area Health Service, Stuart Schneider will be present, along with members of the community committee that has been working on the plan in conjunction with the GSAHS.

With health service issues having featured prominently in the columns of this newspaper of late, shire council general manager Chris Adams has again appealed for concerned citizens to make an effort to attend.

He said while the plan would be used in the design of a new hospital which it is hoped the town will have one day, it would also be of assistance in efforts to upgrade the existing hospital and its services.

He said this was an ideal opportunity for people to assist in determining a suitable level of service at the Tumut Hospital, citing as an example calls for the urgent provision of modern ultrasound equipment.

Janette Watson, manager at the Tumut Family Medical Practice, has joined a chorus of voices to call for the introduction of new technology for local ultrasound services, and provision for bulk billing.

She said Tumut was sadly lacking compared to facilities in situ at the Cooma hospital.

She said whilst a service was available locally it was subject to certain time frames of operation,

limited procedures and was prone to breakdown.

"The one that's there is a bit of a dinosaur; a better machine would increase the degree of scans that could be carried out for patients here in Tumut."

She said the medical practice had written a letter to the Greater Southern Area Health Service expressing concern that the Tumut community was being disadvantaged.

Thursday's meeting will cover numerous other existing and desired services at the hospital.

The Times today carries further letters on the subject of health services and this Thursday's meeting.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, September 20

Meeting addresses fears over health restructuring.

Fears the restructuring of Greater Southern Area Health Service will downgrade Narrandera District Hospital has prompted a meeting between the health service's boss and Leeton and Narrandera councils.

GSAHS chief executive officer, Associate Professor Stuart Schneider, has agreed to meet with council representatives on October 14 while he is at Leeton to talk with hospital staff about restructuring.

GSAHS was formed earlier this year by the merger of the Greater Murray and Southern area health services as part of the state government's plan to save \$100 million in administration costs across the state and direct the money into improved clinical services.

Some 60 administration jobs across the GSAHS area are going to make cost savings.

The new administration structure will result in Narrandera, Leeton, Temora, West Wyalong, Coolamon and Junee hospitals being administered as a "cluster" by one general manager.

Narrandera's health council chairwoman, Gayle Murphy, attacked the new structure last month because it does not include a health service manager at Narrandera hospital.

The chairman of Tumut's health service planning committee, Allan Tonkin, said yesterday the same issue was yet to be raised yet in his

area, but added that he would be concerned if any changes to administration ended up affecting the delivery and standards of clinical services.

He said Tumut would be in a cluster that included other existing Network 5 hospitals at

Tumbarumba, Batlow, Adelong and Gundagai as well as Young, Cootamundra, Harden and Boorowa.

The Daily Advertiser
Wagga Wagga
2005, September 23

Draft plan for better health services in Tumut. Health plans ahead.

A public meeting gives new plan the go-ahead. A draft plan aimed at improving health services in the Tumut district was given the tick of approval at a public meeting last night.

Chairman of the Tumut Local Government Area Health Service Planning Committee, Allan

Tonkin, said about 60 people attended the meeting at the Tumut RSL Club.

"It was an excellent turnout," Mr Tonkin said.

"The general feeling was the plan would be a vehicle to bring attention to deficiencies (in health services)."

One of those deficiencies discussed was a lack of ultrasound options.

Health service plans are being developed by Riverina communities following the creation of the Greater Southern Area Health Service in January.

"The service plan will provide a framework that will guide what services are delivered, facility planning and workforce," Mr Tonkin said.

"The recommendations will be taken on board by the Greater Southern Area Health."

The Tumut plan has 40 recommendations, and the committee wants the community to prioritise them during a 28-day public exhibition before the document is finalised after another public meeting scheduled for November 3.

By Ken Grimson
The Daily Advertiser
Wagga Wagga
2005, September 23

Public meeting told health plan recommends lobbying for hospital redevelopment. Existing facility labelled 'dangerous rabbit warren'

Local residents should be lobbying NSW Health to include the complete redevelopment of Tumut Health Services on the capital works program within the next 3-5 years, a public meeting in Tumut last Thursday was told.

The lobbying campaign is one of numerous recommendations included in the Draft Tumut Health Services Plan, which was discussed at the public meeting on Thursday at the RSL Club.

During the meeting, Community Health's Jennie Fischer also revealed Greater Southern Area Health Service has received funding from NSW Health for public ultrasound facilities at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, a service which will be a direct benefit to Tumut residents.

Almost 60 people attended the meeting, showing the community's interest in the state of health services in Tumut and strong desire to see an improvement.

The meeting was run by Tumut Local Government Area Health Service Planning Committee Chairman, Allan Tonkin, and also included Tumut Community Health Manager, Jennie Fischer, Tumut Hospital Service Manager, Mary Smit, and Greater Southern Area Health Service Manager of Services and Corporate Planning, Janet Chapman.

The purpose of the meeting was to briefly look at what is contained in the draft plan and give the community an opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns.

The plan includes 40 recommendations, which the community is being asked to prioritise during a 28-day public exhibition.

The document will then be finalised following another public meeting scheduled for November 3 and will then be taken back to GSAHS to be formally adopted.

The Draft Health Services Plan was generally well received by the community, however there were calls for the recommendations to be more concrete and for clear benchmarks to be set to allow for achievement comparison.

Mr Tonkin praised the local community for the 'great turn up'

and briefly explained the process behind the current draft plan and what would be done with the plan in the future.

The plan is a result of almost a year of research and consultation with health care providers and is based on the needs of the health services of the area and what GSAHS, as a public health provider, needs to provide.

The meeting was told the purpose of the Draft Tumut Health Service Plan is to complete a comprehensive outline of health services provided in Tumut, meet the current and future needs of the community and to guide service development, facilities and planning.

Ms Chapman described the five main factors in Tumut's population profile, which are: steady population affected by increased work opportunities, an aging population, a relatively low socioeconomic profile, a significant local Aboriginal population, and a general reliance on agriculture, manufacturing and construction industries.

She then went on to describe the health profile of the Tumut population, revealing the main four reasons behind death and hospitalisation are circulatory disease, cancer, respiratory disease and injury.

Ms Chapman also said Tumut shares a statistic with the entire GSAHS area, showing high incidents of asthma, obesity and alcohol-related illness.

Ms Chapman acknowledged the need of an upgrade at Tumut Hospital and said the "facility is past it's use-by date and needs work".

However, Ms Chapman also detailed the health services currently available in the Tumut area and described them as being of a 'high standard', including emergency, surgical, medical and community-based services.

Ms Chapman produced the numbers of patients treated by different services throughout 2003-04, and says the number of births at 145 is a viable number to maintain maternity and surgical services.

She also pointed out that Tumut Hospital also provides services to Gundagai, Batlow, and Tumbarumba.

Ms Chapman also raised a number of local issues including the shortage of health professionals, the

poor condition of the facilities, the lack of service information, difficulties with services for Aboriginal people, the lack of integrated chronic care services and the limited ultrasound services.

However, Ms Chapman also stressed that this was also a great opportunity to focus on maintaining good health.

As well as outlining the future direction of health services in Tumut, the plan reinforces the continuing role of Tumut Hospital as a 'level 3 service' provider.

It also highlights the important role of the Community Health Service in primary prevention, early intervention and treatment services.

The recommendations made in the plan address all health issues and are divided into three sections dealing with workforce, infrastructure and local services.

The workforce recommendations include a focus on the recruitment of additional GPs and allied health staff, the development of an annual training calendar, participation in clinical networks and an annual review of workforce needs.

In the infrastructure area, the plan recommends a facility review and site master plan to be developed to outline the possible short-term solutions to current infrastructure problems.

As mentioned earlier, the plan also recommends that GSAHS, the Tumut Health Service, Tumut Shire Council and the local Health Council lobby NSW Health to include the complete redevelopment of Tumut Health Service on the capital works program within 3-5 years.

Recommendations regarding local services include a potential increase to local surgical services, investigation into rehabilitation and transitional care programs and a review of maternity services with the introduction of criteria for admission if no anaesthetist is available.

Other recommendations include a multi-disciplinary approach to diabetes, a review of chronic disease management, an inter-agency approach to depression and mental illness and a focus on healthy aging.

A Local Services Directory will also be developed and the Schools as Community Centres project will be implemented.

Other recommendations include support for efforts to increase access to ultrasound services, options to increase local pharmacy support and the exploration of an 'innovative' wellness centre.

The questions from the audience covered a wide range of issues, including how funding is distributed throughout the area.

Ms Chapman says money is allocated depending on a number of factors including population features and higher levels of need, as well as distance, however there is always the need to lobby for more money.

Rather than a wish list, Ms Chapman says the recommendations in the plan are meant to be realistic so that they can actually be implemented.

Another concerned resident claimed the Tumut Hospital was put on the capital works program seven years ago however the funding was never allocated.

Ms Chapman replied that Tumut Hospital is second, behind Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, on the priority list for capital works money in this area.

Once complete, the Tumut Health Services Plan will be a useful tool in lobbying politicians for health funding because requirements will have been clearly documented and it will be obvious if promised changes are not implemented.

Local resident, Sue Swann, raised the issue of availability of ultrasound facilities, an issue she has been vocal about in the local press over the past few weeks.

Mrs Swann says it is unsatisfactory to not have bulk-billing ultrasound facilities in Wagga Wagga and expressed concern that many low income earners and pensioners cannot afford to travel to Wagga and pay for the treatment.

Ms Fischer says, soon there will be no need to pay the fees associated with private ultrasound, as new facilities will be available at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital.

Mrs Swan went on to describe the Tumut Hospital as having been "renovated to within an inch of its life", labelled the building as a "positively dangerous rabbit warren" and claimed any money used on renovations would simply be going down the drain.

She claimed Tumut deserved

better, saying the local area is good enough for industry to invest in, and now it is time the government also invested.

Members of the community are being urged to comment on the Draft Tumut Health Services Plan before the next public meeting on November 3.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, September 27

Did Ground Hog Day come to Tumut

Sir - Did Ground Hog Day come to Tumut last Thursday? That's what it felt like when I attended the public meeting about the draft health services plan for Tumut. Same forum, same people, same problems, same bureau-speak, same promises, (or lack of them).

To give them their due, the area health administrators have spent many months consulting with community representatives in Tumut about what should be in the plan. The ideas put forward by locals are included in the document, as are the problems that they identified.

After considering this information, the administrators have made a number of recommendations which will form the basis of a plan for the delivery of health services in Tumut covering the period 2006 - 2011. The purpose of the public meeting was to give locals an opportunity to comment on those recommendations. It was unfortunate, therefore, that only a short period of time was allocated for questions and comments following the excellent presentation of the draft plan in colour on a screen.

During question time, two speakers from the floor referred to the recommendations as "flim flam", and I would have to agree. They do seem to lack substance and seem careful not to make clear, concrete undertakings for measurable outcomes.

My major concern for the Tumut community is that although the biggest and most urgent health problems are identified, lack of doctors, specialist services, poor infrastructure etc. there is no prospect of them being fixed. This is despite the huge efforts made by the community recently to attract investment and big business to the district, resulting in a booming

economy.

Instead, the community is being asked by the area health administration to "lobby" for a new hospital and new community health buildings over the next 3 - 5 years. Lobby? Excuse me?

As one speaker said, we had been lobbying for the past 7 yrs, had been told we were on the public works program and promised a new hospital in 10 yrs i.e. in 2008. Now we are being told Tumut is not currently on the Public Works Program, a new hospital is not on the agenda, not even on the horizon, and we should sharpen our pens and write to our politicians.

On page 54 of the document being presented, under the heading "8.2 Infrastructure", it is acknowledged in black and white that: "The condition of the Tumut District Hospital and Community Health buildings is very poor and has a direct influence on the ability of the health service to provide safe, efficient and accessible services."

Rough translation: the hospital is old, run down, unsafe, and cannot provide an adequate health service.

The report goes on to say even worse: "The emergency department is inadequate with no private space for dealing with mental health clients, resuscitation emergencies or distressed relatives." Rough translation - the hospital emergency dept. is a health hazard.

Both the maternity ward and community health centre are also singled out as being poorly designed and having problems serious enough to contemplate relocation.

The report also states that Tumut had, under the former administration, been prioritised for redevelopment. The recommendation on these matters, however, reads like something out of a "Yes Minister" script and I quote:

"8.2.1 A facility review will be completed by the GSAHS Asset Management service and a site master plan will be developed to outline possible short term (3-5 years) solutions to the current infrastructure problems. This would include as a priority improvement of the emergency department environment, improved access to Community Health and consideration of the relocation of the maternity wards within the

hospital. 8.2.2 GFAHS, the Tumut Health Service, and the local Health Council will lobby NSW Health to include the complete redevelopment of Tumut Health Service on the capital works program within the next 3-5 years."

Rough translation: We'll talk about some renovations and draw some plans some time before the end of 2011. (Note there is no actual commitment to building or supplying anything).

There are some good ideas in the plan, even visionary, and some areas of health management which should be followed through e.g. the co-ordination of services for aged care, palliative care, chronic illnesses, wellness programs, preventative medicine, the treatment of mental illness etc.

However, in my view it is essential at this point in Tumut's history that we need to address the biggest problems first. It's not 'the time to doff our caps and make do with what we've got. It's time to say out loud "The emperor has no clothes!" and he needs to get some pretty quick!

The reality is that rural health is in crisis. We need doctors, nurses, specialists, medical schools, and allied health workers. We will not attract these highly skilled people to rural areas without being able to offer fully equipped, modern hospitals and surgeries. Let's call a spade a spade. The need for infrastructure comes first.

And in that vein, it has been said that "soon there will be no need to pay the fees associated with private ultrasound, as new facilities will be available at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital". That single machine will indeed ease the situation for inpatients at the base hospital, but how many outpatients do you think will be able to access it from the whole region? It is not just Tumut that has this problem. It applies to all patients in the region. Imagine the queue.

One new ultrasound machine at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital (however welcome) does not solve Tumut's problems. I see no change for the people of Tumut who will still be travelling to Canberra for radiology in droves, as they have been for the past 18mths. Incidentally, the draft plan does not appear to reflect the numbers of

Tumut district residents going to Canberra for radiology because the statistics used are for 2003/4.

I have been outspoken about these matters recently, but I make no apology. Having lived here for almost 34 yrs I care about the place and the people who live here who are decent and still have a sense of community. Our hospital is crucial to the wellbeing not only of our physical health, but for the health of our economy and our sense of community security.

Residents are being given the chance to make comments or written submissions about the Tumut Health Service Draft Plan 2006-2011 before it is presented to the next public meeting on Thursday 3rd November 2005. The steering committee meet on Thursday next week to consider any comments and submissions before the final draft plan is prepared.

I urge all residents to read the plan and to comment on it. It's our town's wellbeing that is at stake. If you don't care about the town's future, don't comment or attend the next public meeting.

If you do care, then read the plan and make your views known to the health administrators. They are: Mary Smit, Health Service Manager, Tumut Hospital; Jennie Fischer, Health Service Mgr., Community Health, Tumut Hospital; Janet Chapman, Mgr Service & Corporate Planning, GSAHS Albury.

The final draft Tumut Health Service Plan 2006 -2011 will be presented for adoption by the community at the next public meeting scheduled for Thursday 3rd November. My hope is that every family in the district will be represented at that meeting. I also hope that residents will say in no uncertain terms that this community deserves a d a modern health service appropriate to our needs. We cannot have that until our old hospital is replaced by a new one, which is fully equipped with modern technology.

There is no reason why Tumut cannot be an acute health care centre for the whole district, complete with a fully staffed radiology clinic equipped with the latest technology. It's all a matter of planning and business management.

Perhaps Mr Costello could pass

a few crumbs from his newfound surplus our way. I for one would rather see that money spent on rural hospitals than on \$6 tax cuts any day.

Yours etc. Sue Swann, PO
Box132, Tumut 2720
Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, September 30

Changes to health plan, public submissions welcomed by committee.

The Tumut health services plan will be presented to the public on November 3. The document has undergone some major changes since a draft plan was outlined to a public meeting last month.

A health services plan for the Tumut region has undergone some major changes in the wake of public submission and a recent, well-attended community meeting.

The plan will provide an outline of the current health services in Tumut, but more importantly detail the current and future needs of the community to guide health service delivery, planning and facilities.

More than 60 people attended a public meeting last month to discuss a draft version of the services plan.

Chairman of the committee in charge of preparing the plan, Allan Tonkin, said the committee had received several submissions following the public meeting, which was attended by more than 60 people.

"We've analysed the submissions and amended some of the existing recommendations in the document to take into account the public's view," Mr Tonkin said.

"We welcome the public's input - we want community ownership of the plan."

"This plan is important - it's a way of being proactive, of trying to get ahead of other areas who will be vying for similar services in years to come.

"We're trying to get our problems squared away and solved so we're ahead of the pack."

The services plan now includes several recommendations relating to services, staffing issues, facilities and equipment.

"There was a perception out there that the draft services plan didn't go into enough detail," Mr Tonkin said. "We've tried to address that and the plan has actually

undergone a fairly radical revamp."

The plan now sets out a number of goals for health services in Tumut, including:

- That the Tumut Health Service will ensure services are provided that are most needed by the Tumut community.

- The Tumut Health Service staff will have access to appropriate training.

- The Tumut Health Service will have access to the necessary equipment and infrastructure to deliver services identified in the service plan.

Attached to each of those goals, the committee have included detail the on action required, nominated the responsible organisation and put a timeframe for completion, as well as stressing the desired outcome.

The committee are now putting the final touches to the plan and will meet again on October 30 to finalise the document.

It will be presented to the public at a meeting at the RSL auditorium on November 3 and will then be taken back to the Greater Southern Area Health Service for adoption.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, October 11

Timeframe, costs continue to blow out.

When the Deputy Administrator of the GSAHS, Dr Joe McGirr last year told members of the Tumut Hospital Planning Committee, which has been lobbying hard for the new hospital, that it was appropriate to start the planning process, and that an investigation commencing the early stages of that process was to be undertaken, there were high hopes of a new hospital by 2007.

Dr McGirr (former CEO of the Greater Murray Area Health Service) did emphasise, however, that timelines could not be placed on the project as progress depended on funding being available from the NSW Government under their Capital Works Program.

Convenor of the Tumut Hospital Planning Committee, Chris Adams, said the Tumut Hospital Committee had welcomed the positive view on the process towards a new hospital in Tumut shown by Dr McGirr and Ms Janet Chapman from the Services Planning Unit.

"The committee had previously

been advised by staff from the Health Service where Tumut Hospital sat within the Capital Works List. The advice at that time was that the highest priority was with the Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Junee and Hay Hospitals." said Mr Adams.

"Dr McGirr pointed out that although these other hospitals had a higher priority than Tumut, all now have some action happening, either through actual works underway, or are going through the planning process," said Mr Adams.

Earlier last year the Tumut Hospital Planning Committee presented a submission to the Health Minister's Rural Adviser calling for funds to be provided to allow an early commencement on a Procurement Feasibility Plan as the first step into the process towards a new Tumut Hospital by 2007.

That submission also sought a commitment from Health Minister Morris lemma that construction take place within the current Works Programs.

The committee was particularly keen to clarify the current position given earlier advice by Dr McGirr's GMAHS predecessor, Karen McPeake, who said a new hospital was on the Forward Works program for replacement and predicted a sign off on a new Tumut hospital in two to five years.

Ms McPeake had forecasted a cost of approximately \$10 million, and indicated a new hospital would retain operating theatres and obstetrics, and have more flexible wards than currently is the case.

Meetings two years ago of the committee with the Capital Works Manager and the acting manager, Policy and Planning with the (then) GMAHS, also indicated a new Tumut hospital was on the Forward Works Program, to be carried out after the major upgrade of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, and that it was anticipated to cost roughly the same or slightly more than the West Wyalong Hospital, completed in 2000 for \$8 million.

The advent of new digital technology will add to the cost of fitting out a new hospital. Young hospital, part of the same health "cluster" in the new admin of GSAHS has been fitted out with new digital equipment, including radiology, which will come on line

in 2006 when optic fibre is connected and operational.

Tumut's X-ray equipment is analogue, over 11 years old, and there is no ultrasound, unlike other hospitals such as Deniliquin, Cooma and Young.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, October 21

Sick of the waiting list.

New hospital campaign gets an injection of new blood. Campaign steps up for new Tumut Hospital. Many deficiencies in existing facility.

Frustrated over the lack of a guaranteed commitment from the NSW Government to build a new Tumut Hospital within a set time-frame, Tumut woman Sue Swann says it's time the local community established a "Tumut Hospital Campaign Group" to lobby for the project.

"It is clear money that should have gone to a new Tumut hospital is going to Wagga Base," she said.

"Other hospitals such as Deniliquin have been upgraded; a number of Multi Purpose Service projects, which enjoy joint Commonwealth I state funding, are also being fitted out with the latest digital equipment whilst hospitals like Tumut have to make do with old equipment" claims Mrs Swann.

"Seven years ago we were told Tumut was on the Public Works capital list and we would have a new hospital within ten years.

"Now the Greater Southern Area Health Service is saying the earliest we can look at is 2012, but even that isn't set in concrete."

Mrs Swann says whilst there already exists a Tumut Hospital Committee the time had come for the entire community to focus on the need to campaign hard on the issue and let the government know the depth of feeling over the issue.

"The reports in the draft new Health Services Plan admit the existing infrastructure is inadequate; that there are deficiencies in accident and emergency, and in maternity facilities. According to the plan, services are inefficient and actually unsafe," she claimed.

Mrs Swann says the support of many people had been enlisted and stalls would be conducted in the main street on October 28 and on November 3 the latter date

coinciding with a public meeting on the new Health Services Plan to be presented at the Tumut RSL Club at 5.30 p.m.

A window display incorporating material provided by the Tumut Historical Society has been set up at the Tumut Pharmacy, as a tribute to those who have worked hard to establish and maintain hospital facilities in the town over the past one hundred years.

But interviewees are not expected to include local doctors. (The Times understands Tumut hospital visiting Medical Officers are gagged from officially commenting on certain hospital or health service matters as part of their contracts with GSAHS).

Whilst Mrs Swann, and Mrs Pat Webb are heading the campaign, they say they want it to be a campaign owned by the community.

"If not it will show the community is not prepared to fight for its health services and the economy of the town, and that the big industries, niche tourist industries and the retirement sector don't appreciate just how reliant they are on decent medical services and facilities."

Mrs Swann has called on locals to register their support on the issue at the street stalls on the 28th and 3rd, and show support by attending the public meeting on November 3rd at the RSL Club. Anyone who has experienced difficulty accessing medical services is welcome to seek help at the stalls.

"The draft Health Services Plan suggests we lobby for a new hospital, but through the very body (GSAHS) that is saying the earliest we can expect action is 2012, and it might not happen then.

"Questions need answering as to why we aren't on the Public Works list right now, and why other smaller hospitals are being put ahead of Tumut, she said.

If a campaign committee is formed it could in some ways duplicate certain roles expected of an existing group.

It was just over 12 months ago that a committee that has been in place for the past six years was celebrating news that the planning process for a new \$10 million Tumut Hospital would finally begin.

The Hospital Planning Committee, consisting of general

community members, doctors and other health professionals, was formed in response to a public meeting held back in May, 1999.

That public meeting was called as a result of publicly voiced community concerns regarding the inadequacies of the current Tumut hospital building to serve its present and projected community.

The committee's objective was to ensure the Tumut Hospital is replaced by a new hospital no later than 2009.

But whilst planning was set to begin, actual construction was to depend on State Government funding under its Capital Works Program.

Originally built in 1899 and opened in 1900, it has been altered and added onto numerous times since. Parts of the hospital have been downsized but the building has not been changed to meet its current modern day functions.

This has created efficiency issues with staffhaving to provide services through a rambling building, with like services located remote from each other.

The building contains asbestos; many entrances which makes its operation difficult and after hours security problematic; medical gases cannot be fully reticulated through the building due to its deficiencies which means staff have to rely on bottled gases; and it has no proper facilities for storage of medical records.

There is no facility in the building for a mental health patient and no suitable area where one of these patients can be placed at short notice and receive adequate supervision.

The operating theatres provide a valuable resource locally as well as providing an overflow facility for Wagga, but are old and becoming more difficult to meet accreditation standards. The hospital is also very inefficient in its use of energy.

Tumut hospital currently has 26 beds with an average occupancy of 18 beds used for acute care patients, which is considered high.

It averages 170 admissions per month, with around 500 accident and emergency patients attended to through the accident and emergency unit.

The hospital not only provides general hospital services for Tumut,

Talbingo and rural areas, but also operating facilities and obstetrics for the Riverina Highlands area.

With Tumut being the centre of a summer and winter playground area this unfortunately also brings many emergencies.

It is to the credit of its wonderful staff that within the current "rabbit warren" they are able to professionally provide a wide range of services for our district's vibrant community which will continue to grow rapidly with the plantation timber industry driving a vibrant economy.

The upgrading of the region's timber processing facilities such as Visy, Carter Holt Harvey and Weyerhaeuser, will no doubt ensure that growth over coming years, and with it the requirement for modern hospital facilities.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, October 21

Campaign taken to the streets.

As the community campaign for a new Tumut hospital steps up a gear, information booths are being conducted to increase public awareness on the issue.

One such booth will be conducted in the main street today (Friday) from 9-5, with another next Thursday from 9-3.

The community will have an opportunity to sign letters to the Minister for Health John Hatzistergos and the Premier.

People will also be able to convey to those manning the booth any difficulty they may have experienced in accessing or affording medical services, in order that these can hopefully be documented and hopefully addressed as part of the campaign.

The latter will be followed by the public meeting at the Tumut RSL Club at 5.30 p.m.

Whilst that hour long meeting is set to focus on the presentation of the new Tumut Health Service Plan, setting the direction for the delivery of health services in the area from 2006-2011, it is expected the issue of a new hospital will also be raised.

One of those heading the New Hospital Campaign committee, Sue Swann, said it was pleasing to see the way local organisations, industries and businesses had rallied to the cause.

"The momentum is continuing to build, and hopefully we can apply

the blowtorch on the government to come up with a firm funding commitment.

"There was an understanding some years ago, but now it seems we have been left in the lurch.

"We can't wait another ten years; we need to secure funding and have the government employ architects to prepare a site plan as soon as possible so the new hospital becomes a reality in the next three to five years."

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, October 28

Pratt backs call for new hospital.

THE chairman of Visy Industries, Richard Pratt has joined the growing chorus of voices supporting the campaign for funding of a new Tumut District Hospital.

Mr Pratt's statement backing for the campaign has been included in a pamphlet being distributed around the district, which also includes messages of support from other local industry leaders, the Mayor Gene Vanzella, medical centres, physiotherapists, farming and real estate representatives, accountants, shop owners and the regional development corporation Tumut Region Developing Naturally.

Messages of support have also been included from service clubs, the CWA, the Tumut Neighbourhood Centre and Cancer Voices of NSW

"I fully support the campaign for funding for a new Tumut District Hospital," says Mr Pratt.

"One of the reasons Visy chose to locate in Tumut was because it is a progressive town and receptive to our plans to building a unique factory using the best technology available.

"As a major employer in Tumut we understand that the provision of adequate health services is essential to a growing community," he said.

"Without appropriate modern infrastructure it is impossible to attract and keep doctors, specialists and other allied health services who provide the health care to which all Tumut residents are entitled.

"More than 100 years after the people of Tumut built its first hospital it is well and truly time to build a new hospital with new technology," added Mr Pratt.

Tumut Mayor Gene Vanzella said the shire council was

supportive of the latest community action designed to reinforce the need for relevant health options.

Cr Vanzella said the council also supported the existing Tumut Hospital Committee, which was founded in 1999 with express the aim of acquiring a new hospital for Tumut.

Pointing to council's recent revision of its Social Plan and its endorsement of the current Tumut Health Service Plan 2006-2011 Cr Vanzella said the combined resources of the Plans and Committees together with current community responses would assist in efforts to obtain and maintain the level of health services required.

The committee of the Tumut Neighbourhood Centre Inc has also endorsed the community campaign for a new hospital, saying a commitment was needed from the NSW State Government "to fund the building of the hospital not in ten years time, but now".

Secretary of the Tumut Lions Club, Phyllis Darragh, says despite the work that had gone into the current Area Health Plan, the financial problems besetting the Greater Southern Area Health Service did not inspire confidence that the needs of the Tumut community would be met.

"Whilst it is important for preventative strategies to be put in place to promote good health, and for improvement in Community Health services, there nevertheless remains the issue of the antiquated facilities at Tumut Hospital which are far from what should be acceptable for the 21st Century," she said.

"It should not be forgotten that Tumut is a centre that is not only working hard to attract business, but it is also a major holiday attraction on the route to the snowfields, and to the coastal resorts of the south coast.

"The dedicated nursing staff should not have to put up with the inferior facilities and neither should the people of Tumut.

"It is time to reconsider funding priorities and to ensure that the community does not have to wait indefinitely for decent health facilities and a new hospital."

The president of Tumut CWA, Nath Pidsley says her organisation was involved in the public meeting

held in 1999 from which a committee was formed to secure a new hospital for the Tumut Shire.

"Some progress has been made but we still have an almost dysfunctional hospital which makes it very difficult to attract doctors, nurses and allied staff," said Mrs Pidsley.

"Also some patients, who should be able to receive treatment at Tumut, have to go to Wagga Base or other hospitals.

"A modern hospital with modern technology is also required to ensure business continues to move to our town. This urgently needed hospital would also relieve the pressure on large regional hospitals."

Gilmore residents Col and Jan Locke say the cost of building a new Tumut hospital was the cheapest part of providing adequate health care, and it would be designed in such a way to enable it to be adapted to current and future service requirements to avoid unnecessary distress of family separation.

It would require personnel adequately trained to use equipment for pathology, ultrasound, ECG, EEG and X-ray, and specialist electronic consultation resulting from such tests to be available to medical personnel for efficient diagnosis enabling speedy assessment and treatment.

Casualty and outpatients services should be provided in-house, and the facility should cater for minor surgical procedures, obstetrics and non-surgical treatment of fractures.

Shirley Thompson, proprietor of "My Fair Lady" is one of several local businesspeople to have added their voice to the call to replace the present building which was opened in 1900.

"With the old hospital it will be become increasingly difficult to attract younger doctors, nursing staff etc," she says.

"Members of our community should not have to leave their families and familiar surroundings to go to a hospital in other centres.

"Tumut is regarded as a regional centre for this area, but without a new hospital our growth in all areas can be retarded," added Ms Thompson.

Tumut Real Estate proprietor Leigh Rootsey has commented that if, as with the Visy mill, the whole town could get behind the New

Tumut Hospital project "it would be hoped that the goal could be achieved somewhat sooner than is currently suggested by those holding the Government purse strings."

Frank Delany, of the Tumut RSL Sub-Branch, is another to support accelerating the proposed timeframe for the building of a new hospital in Tumut.

"The latest major overhaul and refurbishment of the existing hospital was carried out in the 1960 era to accommodate the construction of the snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme," he says.

"The present state of the hospital is symptomatic of all government infrastructure in Australia today, as there have been no major works carried out in the last 30-40 years," he says, adding his congratulations to the hospital staff "who do such a sterling job under conditions so clearly less than ideal."

Dr Tedo Haider is yet another to fully support any effort to expedite the building of a new hospital in Tumut.

His comments in the campaign brochure currently being distributed express sadness over the deterioration of the hospitals in both Tumut and Batlow where he and his wife operate medical practices.

"Batlow hospital urgently needs replacing and has been allocated \$7.2 million, but this is short of the amount needed to bring it to a proper standard. A modern, well-equipped hospital is vital to the well being of the Batlow people.

"Tumut's hospital, according to recent written and verbal statements from our health administrators is also in a very poor condition. It also needs urgent replacement," added Dr Haider.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, October 28

Hospital call.

Community backs appeal to health Minister 'People of Tumut and Batlow fed up with broken Govt. promises'.

Almost a thousand signatories, or more than 15% of the total population of Tumut have given support to a letter to the NSW Government calling for a new hospital to be built in Tumut.

The signatures were collected on Friday at the first of two information booths pushing the "No Band-aids"

campaign and simultaneously collecting data on concerns local people may have with health facilities, services and equipment at the local hospital.

The second information booth conducted by the community campaign committee will take place on Thursday prior to a public meeting called by the Council that evening (RSL Club, 5.30 p.m.) when the new Area Health Plan document will be officially presented.

"The 976 signatures given from passing pedestrians on Friday filled 43 pages; it was an overwhelming and staggering level of support, and they will be forwarded to the Minister for Health and the Premier, together with those to be collected on Thursday," said one of the campaign committee's leading lights, Sue Swann.

"The overwhelming consensus of opinion is that people genuinely feel Tumut needs a new hospital," she said.

"They are dead against any more renovations or 'redevelopment'.

"They want to see a firm, concrete commitment and for money to be in an account, architects employed and a contract let as a matter of urgency," said Ms Swann.

"Everyone genuinely and spontaneously felt no new hospital would impact negatively on the local economy.

"Many, having believed a new hospital was to have been built, and construction was just around the corner, indicated their anger that Tumut - and Batlow with its MPS - are being asked to wait again."

Ms Swann said there had been positive comment that Richard Pratt had joined the ranks of those pushing the campaign.

"Batlow residents are clearly despairing about their situation and want Tumut to support them; many indicated Wagga should also have a new hospital on a greenfield site, but all indicated they were fed up with broken promises in respect to Tumut hospital."

Ms Swann said there had been a degree of criticism for the council's role to date, particularly in initially accepting that the community should simply "lobby" for a new hospital. There had also been confusion about the community

committee that had been appointed to lobby for a new facility.

"Most thought it had fallen over or been turned into the Health Services Steering Committee; some feared it would be taken over by the GSAHS and be muzzled by bureaucrats, thereby denying the town an independent voice."

Ms Swann said people had been eager to register their protest at the decrepid state of the existing hospital, and many had stories relating to health services below par.

"A number of mothers with young children had commented that they had given birth in Wagga or elsewhere due to the poor facilities here, or emergencies that could not be handled here.

"Medical imaging also proved to be a big problem for many. People in small business complained that they had to close their business if they had to travel to Wagga for an ultrasound; others requiring multiple ultrasounds indicated they were hundreds of dollars out of pocket. and making up the 'gap'.

"In one case a patient refused treatment unless the latest test was bulk billed, most saying they went to Canberra, Albury or elsewhere for this type of service.

"Our survey reflected a desire to see bulk billing of ultrasound, and a modern ultrasound with an operator located at the hospital to service the shire and surrounding districts, some questioned why Tumut had to contend with an old ultrasound machine and its reliability.

"There were many complaints over patients having to go out of town for basic treatments and operations which were once done in Tumut."

Ms Swann said diabetes, especially where children were concerned, had also been mentioned as a problem area.

"The constraints of staffing levels and pressures at the hospital have apparently sometimes meant patient needs in this area were overlooked," she said.

"Similarly the emergency department was also mentioned as a problem area in terms of privacy, equipment breakdowns, staffing and observation factors.

"As for maternity facilities, mothers complained of poor lighting, lack of space and privacy, sound insulation, a perceived risk of

cross infection and the 'medicalisation' of something natural, i.e. previously at Sheahan House maternity was the central theme, and mothers giving birth were not mixed in with sick people as is now the case."

Apart from design and equipment, Ms Swann said there were numerous complaints over different areas where the facilities had fallen into disrepair.

"Some of those who signed the letter said they had tripped and fallen in the area near Community Health and Pathology, due to the undulating pathway," she said.

"Others complained about confusing corridors.

The computer systems at the present hospital were deemed by some to be below par; physiotherapy was deemed to be poorly catered for with no outpatients and facilities for in-patients almost non-existent and the roads around the hospital were said to be a disgrace with deep potholes.

"Previous patients spoke to us about observing water running down inside walls during rain; concerns were expressed about asbestos being disturbed if renovations were attempted, and sanitary conditions of the toilet facilities of some wards in terms of their location were questioned."

"Facilities for grieving and distressed relatives was mentioned, as was the morgue, with its location and ugliness a source of distress to some visitors and patients.

"Community Health Services buildings were said to be 'invisible' and many surveyed indicated they were not aware of the community health services available locally."

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, November 1

Support for hospital campaign continues.

Well over 1500 signatures have been received already in support of a new Tumut Hospital and full funding for the proposed Batlow MPS. Co-ordinators for the

Concerned Citizens of Tumut Shire, Mrs S. Swann and Mrs P. Webb, who have been amongst volunteers manning information booths in Tumut main street, have sent the following letter to the Premier of New South Wales the Hon. Morris Iemma, and Minister for Health, Mr

John Hatzistergos, concerning the state of both Hospitals.

The letter is as follows Click here.

Tumut & Adelong times
2005, November 4

No promise to fund new hospital by 2007: GSAHS

As the heat continues to be turned up over claims the government has reneged on promises to commit funds by 2007 to the building of a new Tumut hospital, a spokesman for Greater Southern Area Health Service has suggested no such undertaking had ever been given.

But with a new Area Service Plan to be presented to a public meeting in Tumut last night (Thursday), the chairman of the Tumut Health Service Planning Committee, Allan Tonkin, says he believes the plan will alleviate some of the concern by having a formal planning document and projected timetable to which the government would be answerable.

Mr Tonkin said the recently formed community campaign committee that was lobbying hard was justified in having concerns over the confusion as to if and when Tumut would get a new hospital, particularly since the merger of the Greater Murray

Area Health Service into Greater Southern.

A GSAHS spokesperson has claimed no timetable had ever been set, other than that Tumut would follow the construction of a new hospital for Wagga.

The spokesperson said Tumut was still a priority, but Wagga had a higher priority.

The Area Health Service Plan presented at the public meeting at the Tumut RSL Club at 5.30 p.m. yesterday recommends that "the complete redevelopment of Tumut Health Service be included on the NSW Health capital works program and that planning for a new facility should commence within the next 3-5 years."

It calls for action whereby GSAHS is to "confirm Tumut Health Service as a priority for redevelopment".

It also documents action whereby NSW health would be lobbied "to identify Tumut Health Service as a priority and to include

on its capital works program with planning to commence within 3-5 years"

It further recommends that in the meantime there should be a facility review and a site master plan developed to outline possible short term (3-5 years) solutions to the current infrastructure problems at the Tumut Hospital and Community Health Centre

It states this short term refurbishment needs to be catered for in GSAHS's capital works program and include as a priority improvement of the emergency department environment, improved access to Community Health and a consideration of the relocation of the maternity wards within the hospital.

The latter would see a small committee established to undertake a review of the maternity unit relocation and to make recommendations.

Other recommendations contained within the implementation section of the Health Plan include:

- Attracting additional GPs, proceduralists, obstetricians and GP anaesthetists;
- Providing additional surgical activity;
- Encouragement of local clinicians in a surgical services Network;
- Establishment of cardiac and/ or pulmonary rehabilitation programs in the Southern Slopes cluster;
- Introduction of a case management and/ or care co-ordination service to support people with chronic illness, cancer and/or palliative care;
- Development of a web-based service directory for the Tumut region;
- Advocate for additional respite care services;
- Development of an interagency approach to addressing depression and mental illness, including raising community awareness of mental illness and trialing methods of prevention, early intervention and treatment appropriate for the Tumut community;
- Development of criteria for maternity admissions, and review the relocation of the maternity unit;
- Introduction of aboriginal cultural awareness training for all health service staff;
- A review of the location of the Tumut dental Service, to include at least the hospital site or another

school location;

- Increasing the level of pharmacy support to meet Level 3 criteria
- Improved access to public or affordable ultrasound services, including possible development of service level agreement with the current private provider to increase access to bulk billing; introduction of transport support to the wagga service, and/ or other alternatives
- Identification of opportunities to increase the use of telehealth and the enhancement of health-related transport;
- Increase staff forums, carry out an annual review of the staff profile, identify strategies to address workforce shortages.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, November 4

Tumut residents present GSAH with list of demands.

Tumut meeting on health sets goals. Tumut residents call for action on new hospital.

TWO plans addressing a broad range of health services and issues, including a call for a decision on when Tumut might see a new hospital, were presented to a public meeting last night.

Chairman of the Tumut Local Government Area Health Service Planning Committee, Allan Tonkin said the two plans, one the GSAHS final service plan and the other an implementation plan describe the current level of health service delivery in the Tumut area very well.

"One of the express aims of the plan is that a complete re-development of the Tumut health service be included in the NSW Capital works program with planning to commence as soon as possible," Mr Tonkin said.

"We are calling for a firm commitment from NSW Health by June 2006."

Mr Tonkin said the Planning Committee has acted on claims put forward at the September meeting that the service plan's strategies were vague.

"We received five submissions and took recommendations from the plan and created an action plan, a support document, which will cover the first three years of the health service plan," Mr Tonkin said.

"We have taken all the recommendations and have added

an action column, a responsible person column, a timeframe and a desired outcome.

"We put in realistic timeframes and will review them on a regular basis."

Action on Tumut health: Health service manager Mary Smit and chairman of the Tumut Local Government Area Health Service Planning Committee, Allan Tonkin, present the final Tumut Service and Implementation Plans to a meeting of more than 70 people last night.

The Daily Advertiser,
Wagga Wagga
2005, November 4

New hospital 'second fiddle' to Wagga

A new hospital for Tumut will have to wait until after a new Wagga Base Hospital is built.

That was the clear message delivered by Greater Southern Health Service personnel at a public meeting in Tumut last Thursday evening to present the new Health Plan for the district.

At the same time Tumut was reaffirmed as "a priority ... but a priority behind Wagga" by the GSAHS's Manager of Services and Corporate Planning, Janet Chapman.

With a new Wagga Base expected to cost up to \$215 million compared to a new Tumut (Level 3) hospital estimated at \$20m-\$30 million the news has only served to heighten the sense of frustration of those who have long been lobbying for a Tumut local health facility.

About 90 people attended Thursday's meeting at the RSL Club auditorium.

Whilst vowing to continue their campaign, members of a recently formed community action committee have expressed dismay that a new district hospital - that five years ago many locals believed would be planned and funds allocated by now, appears as far away as ever and at least seven years away.

That frustration had also been fuelled over that period at seeing other centres such as Young, Queanbeyan and Junee benefit from new health facilities.

That prompted comment from the floor on Thursday that Tumut was "continually being pushed to the back even when major shortcomings have been identified" and that "it appears Tumut has been

somewhat forgotten by GSAHS".

But the chairman of the Tumut Health Service Planning Committee, Allan Tonkin, said the new Health Plan for the area for the next three years represented the opportunity to get things in place for an enhanced service, so that the area would be able to attract health professionals to Tumut, prior to the provision of new facilities.

"It's not just about buildings," he said. "We hope this plan and the committees to be formed will result in innovative ideas so professional people will want to come here.

"You can throw millions of dollars at something, but there has to be something more.

"This Plan is a great start and we just need the commitment to do it.

"Wagga is looking at several hundred million; our hospital would cost nothing like that, but if the committee works as a community based body we should be able to get what we want."

During question time it was revealed a new Tumut hospital would most likely be built on the land surrounding the existing hospital.

Facility Review

During the public meeting it was pointed out a recommendation in the Health Plan called for planning for a "complete redevelopment" of the hospital to be commenced within the next three-five years.

Ms Chapman told the meeting a review of the current hospital facilities aimed at fixing a number of problems should hopefully be finished by next May.

That review report would document a new master plan for short term actions to be carried out over the next three years.

The plan suggests the relocation of the maternity wards within the hospital, the improvement of the emergency department environment, and improved access to Community Health should have priority in the short term improvements to be carried out.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, November 8

Health Plan outcomes will be closely monitored.

Tumut finally has a Health Services Plan, after the document was officially presented to the community at a public meeting on

Thursday night.

The plan has been 10 months in the making, as the Steering Committee Chairperson, Alan Tonkin told the packed room at the RSL.

Almost 90 people attended the meeting, which was a good indication of the community's interest in the health services plan.

The meeting was chaired by Mr Tonkin, and also led by Tumut Shire Council General Manager, Chris Adams, Tumut Hospital Service Manager, Mary Smit, Network 5 Community Health Manager, Jill Ludford, Greater Southern Area Health Service (GSAHS) executive representative, Karen Edward and GSAHS Manager of Services and Corporate Planning, Janet Chapman.

All members of the Health Steering Committee were in attendance as well as the majority of Tumut Shire councillors.

Following the introduction of the Tumut Health Services Plan, the purposes and outcomes of the plan were discussed, as well as the next steps in the process.

Mr Tonkin praised the community for the turn out at the meeting and for the general interest in the plan since work began 10 months ago.

"There has been a lot of progress since the last meeting at the end of September, and a number of submissions and priorities have been received from the community," Mr Tonkin said.

"The Tumut Health Services Plan has goals, targets and set dates to achieve the targets by," Mr Tonkin said, "and this is the document with which we, as a community, can hold GSAHS to account for our health services in the future."

The plan outlines Tumut's health services over the next six years, detailing what will be required in the future and the steps that can be taken now to ensure the health services remain adequate.

Amongst the plan's recommendations are initiatives aimed at additional surgical activity, support services for people with chronic illness, cancer and palliative care, a web-based service directory, additional respite care services, an interagency approach to addressing depression and mental illness, cardiac and pulmonary reha-

bilitation programs, a review of the location of the Tumut Dental Service, and identification of increased telehealth and health transport opportunities.

The meeting was told a committee would monitor progress on the Health Plan, there would be further public meetings next year, and a formal review every 12 months.

Sub-committees would be formed, with the possibility of a purpose built building for the preventative health and early intervention programmes envisaged.

Some time was spent at the meeting discussing ways at attracting additional health professionals, including GPs, proceduralists, obstetricians and anaesthetists.

On the issue of staff it was suggested that first class facilities would not necessarily raise the standard of staff or the ability to recruit staff, and the example was given of the brand new hospital in Young still having difficulties finding suitable staff.

The other issue brought up with some irony was that while a recommendation in the plan called for preventative measures for healthy aging and reducing falls in the aged population, the current infrastructure at Tumut Hospital has floor changes which could contribute to a fall.

The meeting successfully introduced the community to the new Health Services Plan, and from the response during Thursday's meeting, the community will no doubt be watching to ensure all recommendations in the plan are implemented promptly.

Questioned as to why things had taken so long, Ms Chapman said: "We have taken the first step in what will lead to a number of things including the facility review early next year."

"The process has been started with the Health Plan, the facility review will be carried out, and the local committee will be "looking for feedback."

Earlier, no answer was forthcoming as to claims other towns' health facilities upgrades and new hospitals had been approved and funded ahead of Tumut.

Ms Sue Swann had drawn the meeting's attention to the "huge

effort" that had gone into attracting major industry investment in the area in the expectation local health facilities would be brought up to an appropriate standard.

"Why hasn't that occurred; why are we further back than we were back then?" she questioned.

"The hospital is over 100 years old; Wagga was built in the 60s; our building needs replacing.

She reiterated concerns that Tumut had once been promised new facilities by 2007.

"Whilst everyone fully supports the initiatives including those in respect to preventative health outlined, the present building is not up to par and something must be done to solve that in the short term - not five years, not 10 years - the facility is needed now."

She also called for improved access locally to ultrasound services, urging GSAHS to look at the benefits of a service encompassing Tumut, Batlow, Adelong as far as Tarcutta and the new area of the former Yarrawlumla shire added into Tumut Shire.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, November 8

Sir, - As co-ordinator of the "No More Band-aids" campaign I wish to thank the many people who have unhesitatingly lent their support for our cause - a new Tumut Hospital now, rather in many years to come.

The support has been overwhelming and heartening. A special thank you to my husband Kevin who has been my rock, working tirelessly for weeks, providing financial, technical and more support.

Thanks also to Pat Webb my co-ordinator who has been a tower of strength, Tumut Shire Council and all those who helped produce the booklet "Rural Health Matters", Tumut & Adelong Times for help with printing and coverage, Tumut and District Historical Society for putting together the tribute display to our pioneers who built the original hospital, and the many locals who manned the information booths in Wynyard Street, Tumut.

There are many others who lent their support, too numerous to name. Thank you everybody.

Last Thursday, November 3, 446 people signed a letter to the Dir. General of Department of NSW

Health Robyn Kruk outlining their concerns at the state of Tumut Hospital and detailing some of its problems.

Letters containing a copy of this petition have also been sent to Federal and State politicians.

Since then, other disturbing information has come from members of the public.

Last week's public meeting was well attended. Unfortunately, yet again the general public were given scant opportunity to ask questions of our health administrators following the presentation of the Tumut Health Services Plan 2006-2011.

I know that many who attended that meeting were expecting me to speak on their behalf. It was disappointing, therefore, that I was stopped virtually mid sentence after only a few minutes and the microphone taken from me before being able to raise their concerns.

Yes, I asked more than one question - but I expected administrators of that calibre to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time! I felt that I was gagged. Others tell me they felt the same way.

There were many who wanted to discuss matters with health administrators and get answers to many questions. They were not given the chance because the meeting was dosed at approximately 6.45 p.m. even though the room was booked for hours more. What was the rush?

It disturbs me that the issue of a new hospital is still not resolved, along with many other serious matters relating to the provision of health facilities in this district.

I am also disturbed that the Tumut Health Services Plan, although based on the local government boundaries, seems to centre on the town of Tumut (what about Batlow hospital?).

The whole issue of the need of new hospitals and health facilities does not belong to me. This is a community issue. It belongs to everybody, all the families and businesses in the district whose lives and incomes will be affected if it is not fixed, and quickly.

I therefore make this offer to the community. I am prepared to continue with the "No More Band-aids" campaign and to fight for the rights of local people, but on certain conditions. Those conditions

are - that I receive some indication of support from the community as to whether they want me to continue campaigning on their behalf.

If you, the person reading this, want the "No More Band-aids" campaign to continue to promote the cause of a new hospital for Tumut and Batlow, and to promote the improvement of health facilities and services in this district, I need you to tell me. I will only do this if the community want it. I can be contacted via PO Box 132, Tumut.

On the ultrasound issue, politicians I have been lobbying have requested that people who have had problems in accessing and affording ultrasound services in this district (especially if they are pensioners and denied bulk billing) to come forward and say so. Anyone who wishes me to press on their concerns can contact me at the above address.

The problems are still here. They will not go away without direct action.

Yours etc. Sue Swann, Co-Ordinator "No More Band-aids - New Hospital Now" campaign

Tumut
Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, November 11

Sir-, I read with great interest Sue Swann's letter (T&A Times) regarding the "No More Band-aids", the fight for a new hospital campaign, in which she asks for the community's thoughts on pursuing the program.

From the outset I do not profess to be an expert on public health matters but, I do believe I am a realist.

The whole health system and funding of same is far more complex than one could possibly imagine and I certainly have no expertise in that area.

Sure, everyone wants a new hospital and the best of medical services that money can buy, however, without having an intimate knowledge of the economics and distribution of public funds, one could not possibly make a definitive judgment on the value or likely outcome of supporting the "No More Band-aids" lobby.

There is no doubt the biggest priority for this region is to have the new Wagga Base Hospital built and equipped with the latest technology and specialist personnel. This is

becoming a reality and will better serve the entire region.

If it means we have to wait longer for our "new" hospital, so be it, as we could not possibly expect to have the same level of services and specialists- as a regional hospital. We are kidding ourselves if we think we can demand action in our time frame rather than the government's.

One area of concern if the community decides to support the "No More Bandaid" program is the use of car bumper-bar stickers and various visual protest signs throughout the area.

I for one have voiced my concern to Mrs Swann when she asked for my support with a "No More Bandaid" bumper-bar sticker campaign. I believe that it would be environmentally irresponsible to conduct a bumper bar sticker program.

One vividly remembers the "Bob Bailey" Super market promotion with yellow stickers, some of which are still in circulation today, 20 years after the promotion.

Another example is the massive visual pollution of south west Sydney concerning the very public campaigns protesting against the Badgery Creek Airport Project which has thousands of signs still littering the area.

We have an elected council whose duties are to manage in consultation with the Tumut Hospital planning committee (Tumut Health Service Plan) all aspects of pursuing a new hospital.

These people are experts in their field and should be given every encouragement in seeing the project through to finality.

One has to appreciate that the way of the world in many fields is "regionalisation". I don't necessarily believe regionalisation is good for smaller rural communities like ours but in the health arena it does have direct benefit for the wider community by having a specialist centre that is accessible to more of the region's populace.

There are many issues regarding "regionalisation" apart from health that equally deserve attention, and no doubt in time regionalisation generally will be put under the microscope, as many rural communities like ours do have plenty to fear as commerce and job

opportunities continue to suffer from the "sponge" effect caused by major regional centres' domination.

Using the words of Dr Peter Ellyard (consultant to Tumut Shire) we need to take a planetary view (community view) where self interest is not the only consideration in decision making. If we don't, the future growth of our region will be put at risk.

Yours etc. Phil Barton, Tumut
Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, November 18

Architects appointed for Batlow MPS.

The appointment of an architect to design the new Batlow Multi Purpose service building to replace the Batlow Hospital has been announced by NSW Health Minister John Hatzistergos.

Following a tender process, the firm of Rice Daubney Architects has been commissioned to undertake the Project Definition and detailed design planning for the MPS.

The firm will also be designing MPS facilities for Berrigan and Junee, and a completely refurbished Emergency Department at Griffith Base Hospital, said the Minister.

He said the detailed design for the three MPSs would see a continuation of planning that has been underway for some time.

He said each MPS facility would have residential aged care Beds, acute beds, emergency facilities, staff accommodation, ambulance stations and facilities for Community Health, and would be built on a greenfield site.

The Minister said the detailed design work was expected to allow tenders to be let for construction of all four projects in the first half of 2006.

There is still no news on whether the Government has agreed to increase its \$7 million commitment to the Batlow project by the further \$3 million regarded as necessary to bring it to the level of service and capability previously identified in studies, and for which the local MPS committee and shire council have been lobbying hard.

The proposal long envisaged for the Batlow-Adelong MPS has involved a 24-bed facility with 5 acute beds and 19 residential aged care places (the latter split between eight high care beds, one respite bed

and a 10-bed hostel.

Late last year it was projected the project would cost around \$10 million, several million more than that calculated some three years ago. Since then the Government has promised \$7 million, but there have been fears that could mean the project being cut back on community's and the committee's expectations.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, November 18

Sir - Wow! A car salesman complains about bumper sticker advertising! You read it in the T&A Times first (Fri 18/11 Letter to Ed. P. Barton).

To set everyone's mind at rest, the "No More Bandaid" campaign (now incorporated as a community group "No More Bandaid Solutions Inc.") has no current plans to flood the place with bumper stickers. In a private conversation with Mr Barton, I did indeed broach the subject, but following an e-mail from him, I took on board his comments and we shelved the idea. I don't quite see the point of it being raised in a letter to the editor now.

Yes, the delivery of public health services, especially to rural areas, is complex and problematical given the ever growing expense and expectations people have.

That is why the "No More Bandaid" campaign for new hospitals included not only Tumut, but Batlow and Wagga Wagga Base hospitals. That is why we were so vocal about Wagga Wagga Base suffering the indignity of not having one single ultrasound machine on site, with patients ferried around the countryside at tax payers' expense and patients' inconvenience.

To argue that Tumut should wait its turn in the current circumstances, however, is a bit hard to take. As has been revealed in the media and at the last public meeting, other hospitals seem to be continually jumping in front of Tumut, even though Tumut has been waiting a considerable time.

Nobody is denying that Wagga Wagga Base hospital needs immediate replacement. It was built in the early 60's and should have been replaced long ago. So why wasn't it? (One question "No More Bandaid" would like answered). Good business managers plan ahead

for asset replacement and put aside funding accordingly. Surely no-one is suggesting that all other hospitals in the GSAHS should now wait until a new Wagga Wagga Base hospital is completed? That project could take the best part of ten years, during which time all those other hospital facilities in the region which are now at breaking point will be critical.

The State of NSW is not broke. The State Budget, when I last heard, was not in deficit. There seems to be plenty to fund projects such as the up-market skiing end of Kosziusko National Park (\$250 million) and other projects in Sydney, plus Sydney's never ending road and rail system problems.

And where is the Commonwealth Government in all this? Wasn't the GST supposed to fix all our woes when it came to health, education etc.? I happen to think that the Commonwealth Government has a special responsibility when it comes to supporting rural health, especially where the provision of capital outlay for technological infrastructure is concerned. Country people pay taxes, just as our city cousins do.

It now seems \$300 million of Wheat Board money went to Iraq (ie. to our enemies) before our government declared war on that country. One tenth of that money would have built a decent hospital in Tumut. The rest would have built a superb teaching hospital in Wagga Wagga. Similarly, if only a small portion of the \$21 billion that went on tax cuts had been set aside to help rural communities update their hospitals, we would all be a lot better off.

Recently, Tumut citizens identified aged care accommodation (retirement villages, nursing homes) as an urgent need. That industry depends on having local access to adequate modern medical facilities, and at present we do not meet those needs. I am sure our Shire Council's consultant is fully aware of that fact. If not, we shouldn't be paying him.

By the way, the Tumut Hospital Planning Committee is a community committee was formed following a public meeting some years ago. It is not the Tumut Health Service Plan Steering Committee.

Yes, it's complex. But one thing is not so hard to grasp. All good

things don't necessarily come to those who wait, especially where governments are concerned and where ordinary people leave it to the "experts" to decide their fate.

It's time to ditch the bandaid solution approach and bring rural health facilities into the 21st century.

Yours etc. Sue Swann Secretary
"No More Bandaid Solutions Inc.",
PO Box 491, Tumut, NSW 2720
Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, November 22

Build Wagga Base first: Tumut man.

A businessman says the new regional hospital in Wagga should get top priority.

Leading Tumut businessman Phil Barton has caused a stir by supporting construction of a new regional hospital in Wagga ahead of a determined push to replace his own town's ageing hospital.

Mr Barton, who owns Parktown Autos, was approached by a group calling itself No More Band aids to support its lobbying for a new Tumut hospital.

Instead, Mr Barton wrote a letter to the editor of The Tumut and Adelong Times newspaper saying there was no doubt the biggest priority for the region was to have the new Wagga Base Hospital built and equipped with the latest technology and specialist personnel.

Yesterday, Mr Barton said although his view had been attacked by the No More Band aids group, the overwhelming number of people who had spoken to him about his letter supported his stand.

"My view simply is we have to get your Wagga hospital up and running before ours, we need the regional hospital up and running and fully staffed," Mr Barton said.

Mr Barton said a new Wagga hospital would have benefits for the whole region because patients with complicated or serious health problems could be treated closer to home at Wagga instead of having to go to Sydney or Melbourne.

Also, the regional hospital would attract medical specialists who would be of benefit to patients living in all Riverina centres, including Tumut.

Tumut Mayor Gene Vanzella said he estimated a new Tumut hospital would cost \$40 million,

while the Wagga project has been costed at more than \$215 million.

"We'll push for both Tumut and Wagga, but in no particular order," Councillor Vanzella said of his council's position.

Weekend Advertiser,
Wagga Wagga
2005, November 26 and 27

Mountain group backs new Wagga hospital

A Tumut community group pressing for new hospitals at Tumut and Batlow said yesterday it also supported the immediate building of a new base hospital in Wagga.

Secretary of newly-formed No More Band aids, Sue Swann, said the group was campaigning for the replacement of Tumut's 106-year-old public hospital and the "dilapidated" Batlow hospital as a matter of urgency.

"We have also campaigned on behalf of low-income earners and pensioners for easy access to affordable medical imaging and for the immediate building of a new base hospital at Wagga," Ms Swann said.

Ms Swann said many Tumut residents felt they had been brushed aside by health administrators despite the development of a new five-year Tumut Health Service Plan.

"They believe the problems remain unresolved and fear that unless there is concrete commitment made by the NSW Government in the immediate future, there will be long-term damage to the health and economy of the region," she said.

Ms Swann said the group had been overwhelmed with messages of encouragement and support from Tumut residents.

Weekend Advertiser,
Wagga Wagga
2005, November 26 and 27

Group's bid to take hospital case directly to the Minister

ORGANISERS of the "No More Band aids" campaign have vowed to press on with their efforts to secure replacements for Tumut's 106-year-old public hospital and the dilapidated Batlow hospital "as a matter of urgency" by taking their case directly to the Government.

And whilst there has been

widespread publicity in the wake of local businessman Phil Barton's recent letter to the Times, supporting construction of a new region hospital in Wagga ahead of Tumut, the "No More Band-aids" group says it has no gripe with a new base hospital at Wagga.

"In fact we are on record as having also campaigned on behalf of low income earners and pensioners for easy access to affordable medical imaging, and for the immediate building of a new Base hospital at Wagga," said group spokesperson Sue Swann.

Mr Barton wrote to the Times with the view Wagga's new hospital had to be up and running prior to Tumut's, because patients with complicated or serious health problems could be treated closer to home instead of having to go to capital cities. It would also be better placed to attract specialists once a new Base hospital was built, he said.

Meanwhile organisers of the group campaign say overwhelming community support has resulted in them founding an incorporated non-profit organisation to be known as "No More Bandaid Solutions Inc."

"The new group was officially registered on November 15, and aims to promote and work towards the improvement of health services in rural and regional NSW," said Ms Swann who has become its secretary.

"The principal activities of the organisation will be in the fields of health education, liaison between community and health administration, advocacy for individuals and community groups, research into health needs of country people, and the establishment and delivery of medical services."

She said to date, despite the formulation by Greater Southern Area Health Service of a long term plan to cover health administration in the area, and two public meetings, many local residents still felt they had been brushed aside by health administrators.

"They believe the problems remain unresolved and fear that unless there is concrete

commitment made by the NSW Government in the immediate future, there will be long term damage to the health and economy of the region," said Ms Swann.

"Following personal representations made on their behalf, the management committee of the new group, which includes representatives from local medical and community organisations, are now in discussion with the NSW Government regarding the initial issues which sparked the campaign.

"A request for formal negotiations has been lodged and is currently being considered by the Minister's officer.

"Other politicians have now also responded to correspondence from the group."

Ms Swann said the management committee has been pleased at the response from locals who "have demonstrated that community spirit is still alive and well in Tumut."

A window display in Tumut Pharmacy as a tribute to the local community that built Tumut District Hospital in 1899 had drawn much interest, she said.

Ms Swann said she had been inundated with messages of encouragement and support over recent months and weeks which she greatly appreciated.

"I appreciate all the words of encouragement and will endeavour to represent the concerns raised to the best of my ability," she said.

"Membership of 'No More Bandaid Solutions Inc' is open to those who are keen to support the aims of the group which are geared to improve rural health facilities, particularly in the Tumut region."

For further information, to apply for membership or to donate to the campaign people can write to The Secretary, 'No More Bandaid Solutions Inc', P.O. Box 491, Tumut, NSW 2720, send an e-mail to fixitnow@tpg.com.au or log onto the web site www.nomore-band-aids.homestead.com

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, November 29

Why is Tumut being left out in the cold?

SIR, - My nameless critic (Thmut & Adelong Times Friday, September 15, 2005) misses the point, and the point is this.

When health services are privatised and there is no alternative service offered by the public health system, people suffer.

And I for one am not prepared to remain silent when I know that my fellow citizens are being treated unfairly by big business and governments, especially when this affects people's health.

Being "grateful" to a private company doesn't come into it. This company is not a charity. There are profits to be had in radiology, as there are in pathology and pharmaceuticals.

There is no need to doff our caps and feel beholden to them, especially when there are such obvious deficiencies in the service to this area, and especially when other contractors could offer a better service - given the chance.

Country people are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity by both private enterprise and government. We are not lesser beings. We pay the same taxes as our city cousins.

Yet our health facilities seem to be slowly but surely withdrawn to other locations or allowed to deteriorate to the point where they fall over and are not replaced. (Case in point - the withdrawal of radiology from Batlow, and Tumut hospital which now resembles a rabbit warren.)

There now seems to be an expectation that country people should travel to regional and city centres for medical treatment.

This is the very point I was making which seems to have escaped my anonymous detractor.

Some people - pensioners, frail and elderly, cannot travel. They do not own cars, and if they do, cannot afford the price of the petrol it takes to get to Wagga Wagga, Canberra or Sydney.

They cannot afford the high cost of radiology and many other specialist services. And some of them are now going without.

Australians elect governments to do a job. That job is to serve the people.

The whole point of electing

governments is to ensure that essential services, (e.g. health, communications, roads) are provided universally, including areas that are unprofitable to commercial enterprise, e.g. country areas.

We do not want a two tiered health system in this country, i.e. one for the rich and one for the poor, as is the case in the US where the dollar rules.

Make no mistake, there is one underlying motive which drives all private enterprise. Profit. Without profit, there is no justification for commerce and it moves on, or folds.

Fairness and equity are regarded as essential ingredients of what it means to live in Australia. Government backed utilities are necessary to underpin that egalitarian nature of our Australian society.

I do not question the right of any company, including the corporation I-Med which now apparently owns the radiology company in Wagga Wagga, to conduct its business.

I have never said or implied that the staff of that company are anything other than friendly.

I have said, however, that radiology in Canberra and Sydney is cheaper, (in some cases bulk billed) and results are to hand within hours as a matter of course, not just in an emergency.

The people of Tumut Shire need to wake up to what is going on in this region's health services and ask why is Tumut Shire being left out in the cold?

Why have smaller towns and centres got new ultrasound machines, (paid for by the Department of Health), new multi purpose health centres, new hospitals, when we are expected to wait another 10-15 years for our hospital (which is over 100 years old) to be replaced?

What have these other towns got that Tumut doesn't? Or, who do they know that we don't?

Tumut residents have been vocal about a number of issues lately - a bridge, the destruction of our beautiful river, the burning of refuse. We are not afraid to take on bureaucrats or big business.

Health services are vital to our community, so I hope that the same people who have been vocal on these issues will be as vocal this week when officials from our area health service come to Tumut on

Thursday.

Many people have expressed their opinions to me about the deficiencies of our health services and I thank them for that.

I am happy to take up matters with politicians and bureaucrats on their behalf, but I'm not the one holding the purse strings.

Come and express those same opinions to the people who do hold the purse strings, at the public meeting on Thursday.

My thanks to the many people of the district who have given me support, especially the health professionals who are prevented from speaking publicly about their concerns.

I urge everyone in Tumut, Adelong, Batlow and the surrounding districts to attend the public meeting this week.

It is to be held at 5.30 p.m. on Thursday, September 22, at Tumut RSL Club.

Yours etc. Sue Swann, Tumut
Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, December 9

The state of our local hospital.

Sir, - I was a visitor at Tumut hospital this morning (December 8) and as a taxpayer and thus a contributor to State (and Federal) health, I was horrified on walking past the corridor at the back of the solarium to see an area approximately 7ft x 4ft pulled up revealing what appeared to be dry rot damage to the floor.

I encourage visitors to the hospital, and indeed anyone interested in our hospital, to inspect this area and reflect on how far it might extend up this corridor and where else in our hospital other damage may be found.

Anyone who feels Tumut is not in need of a new hospital is kidding themselves.

Someone else looking at the damage at the same time I was inspecting it said, "It's interesting to see what is holding our hospital up."

Yours etc. Pat Webb
Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, December 9

Sir, - Please allow me space in your paper to voice my concerns over the current state of Tumut Hospital.

My concerns are that the existing building is in a state of decay. Never

mind the 'rabbit warren' scenario, it needs some major work, like yesterday!

I am a volunteer worker on various committees who have shown long term commitment to improving all aspects of health care within the district. This includes the replacement of the existing hospital building.

By striving within the structures in place, I am still convinced that Tumut is making progress towards obtaining a new hospital. The process followed by the Tumut Health Service Plan was a necessary first step towards this realisation.

I am not an advocate of the 'No Bandaid's Approach' as it would not be possible to have a new structure up and running quickly enough, even should money miraculously become available tomorrow.

Some short-term solutions must be put into place to make it relatively comfortable for both patients and staff. They should not be further disadvantaged or sacrificed for the convenience of a quicker solution.

If you have been to Tumut Hospital lately you will, no doubt, know exactly what I am talking about. A section of the hospital at the back of the Solarium has been blocked off with builder's reinforcement wire. The floorboards, which quite obviously show signs of having rotted away, now expose a gaping hole.

It would be difficult to believe that the problem is confined to this small area of the floor. I was left wondering if someone actually went right through it before it was discovered.

Incidentally, nice touch by the staff who have placed Christmas decorations on the wire, adding a little festive cheer to a very dismal eyesore.

I have no idea how we can prompt any immediate action from the Greater Southern Area Health Service who appear to be currently stretched to this dismal, pathetic building and I for one would welcome some 'Bandaid' fixing at the moment.

Surely, this would be an improvement to what is currently a very sad facility. Even 'rabbit warrens' have stable floors.

Yours etc. Rhonda Blunt,
Lambie Street, Tumut
Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, December 9

**'Premier should honour his word'
New hospitals needed urgently:
Hodgkinson**

MEMBER for Burrinjuck Katrina Hodgkinson, speaking in State Parliament, has called on the Premier to honour his promises to the people of Tumut, Adelong and Batlow to give the Tumut Hospital and the Adelong/Batlow MPS high priority.

Citing the state of the two hospitals as examples of the "gross under-funding of public health by a Sydney-centric Labor Government", Ms Hodgkinson said she had "lost count" of the number of times she had referred to the need for both these facilities to be replaced.

"Both the Tumut and Batlow hospital buildings are unsafe, inefficient and in need of immediate replacement," said Ms Hodgkinson.

"At the moment there is only one factor that is keeping the residents of Tumut and the Adelong Batlow area supplied with halfway decent health care - the dedication and commitment of the local medical and administrative staff who are forced to work in substandard buildings," she said.

She said she had been informed that in a Department of Health report of ten years ago the condition of the Tumut Hospital was described as poor and in need of replacement.

"The hospital is now described by the Tumut Health Services Plan as being in very poor condition and affecting the safety and efficiency of health services," she told her Parliamentary colleagues.

"The list is terrible: asbestos in buildings, holes in walls, water running down walls when it rains, lack of office space, varying floor levels causing tripping hazards, overcrowding in wards, poor resuscitation facilities in accident and emergency wards, unsanitary toilet and shower facilities, a lack of privacy particularly in maternity wards, restricted access to ultrasound facilities, and the list

goes on," she said.

"One wonders if the hospital will actually have to fall down before any action eventuates from the NSW Labor Government."

Ms Hodgkinson said if it was possible, the Batlow Hospital was in even worse condition, with the dis-used building that used to be the Henty Hospital in better condition than the operating Batlow Hospital building.

"The Adelong Batlow multi-purpose services (MPS) centre has been in the planning stage since before I was elected to this place almost six years ago," she said.

"What has happened since then? The Adelong/Batlow MPS was supposed to be completed by 2003; then by 2006-07.

"Most recently, in response to my continued questioning, the Minister for Health said that the Adelong Batlow MPS will now be completed in 2007-08.

"On 21 May, 2004, Mr S. Butt, the Acting Manager of the Capital Works of the Greater Murray Area Health Service, informed the Tumut Hospital planning meeting that the Adelong/Batlow MPS was being prioritised behind that of Junee. When I raised this with the Minister for Health he denied that this was said to the residents of Tumut.

"This is just one of many examples of the misinformation and deceit that are characterising this Government's approach to providing a decent standard of public health."

Ms Hodgkinson told the House that on November 4 the Tumut & Adelong Times had carried an article in which an area health service spokesperson was quoted as saying there had never been a commitment to fund the Tumut Hospital redevelopment by 2007.

"I have personally spoken to the former Minister for Health, now the Premier, who looked me straight in the eye and said that the Tumut Hospital and the Adelong Batlow MPS would be given a high priority.

"The same occurred with the Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Southern Area Health Service, Mr Schneider, just after he had been appointed.

"What a load of lies that has turned out to be. The bottom line is that the NSW Labor Government has for the past 11 years failed to properly plan and fund public health

facilities in southern NSW.

"The residents of Tumut do not believe what this Government or its health agencies say any more; they have been told too many lies."

Ms Hodgkinson drew attention to the fact that on one single day locals collected 1000 signatures, "15 per cent of the population of Tumut" - calling for the immediate building of a new hospital in Tumut.

"The Premier must honour his promises to the people of Tumut, Adelong and Batlow," she said.

"We need new hospitals in this part of Burrinjuck electorate; we need them urgently, and the funding must be provided now."

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, December 13

**Hospital master plan by May,
2006**

Admitting both the Tumut Hospital and the Community Health Centre do not meet modern requirements, Greater Southern Area Health Service says it anticipates a site master plan will be completed by May next year "to identify short-term solutions to improve safety and efficiency at the site."

Acting chief executive of GSAHS, Nigel Lyons, has told the "No More Bandaid Solutions Inc" group co-ordinators Sue Swann and Pat Webb of Tumut that the Tumut Service Plan recently presented to the public had recommended that a facility review be completed by next March with the site master plan to follow.

He has also indicated the GSAHS expected to commence developing its asset strategic plan within the next few months with a condition audit to be carried out and used to review the facility against service requirements identified in the Service Plan.

He said this process would "help document any deficiencies and quantify any risks in the current infrastructure, and will provide the basis for developing short and long-term capital works strategies for the site."

He acknowledged both the hospital and the Community Health Centre are not up to modern requirements regarding functionality, integration and security.

Mr Lyons was replying to representations made to the Director

General for Health in regard to the need for improved health services at Tumut Hospital and the need for replacements for both it and Batlow hospital as a matter of urgency.

Mr Lyons said the recently completed service plan confirmed the continuing role of Tumut Health Service in providing local emergency, medical, surgical, maternity and community health services.

"All current role delineation levels will be maintained. Proposed service changes or enhancements include the development of a multi-disciplinary approach to diabetes, introduction of new chronic care services including an increased focus on primary prevention and the development of an interagency approach to depression and mental illness," he said.

"The Tumut service plan also highlights concerns about the poor condition of the Tumut Hospital and Community Health Centre. Both sites are old buildings that do not meet modern requirements regarding functionality, integration and security. The service plan therefore recommends that a facility review be completed by March 2006 and a site master plan is anticipated by May 2006 to identify short-term solutions to improve safety and efficiency at the site.

"Please note that the Greater Southern Area Health Service expects to commence developing its asset strategic plan within the next few months. As part of this process a condition audit will be completed for Tumut.

Health Service and the Area will use that to then review the facility against the service requirements as identified in the Service Plan. This process will help to document any deficiencies and quantify any risks in the current infra-structure and will provide the basis for developing short and long-term capital works strategies for the site."

He said a further public meeting will be held in Tumut next March-May to present the outcomes of the facility review.

He said the letter to the Director General had also raised concerns about the access to publicly funded medical imaging services for Tumut residents.

"Please note that public medical imaging services are currently

provided at Tumut Hospital appropriate to the role delineation of the local health service," he said.

"These local services are supported by more specialist services available in Wagga Wagga and by services, including ultrasound, that are provided locally by private providers." said Mr Lyons.

On the question of the progress of the redevelopment of Batlow Hospital, he said GSAHS has recently announced the appointment of the Project Director Planning, Principal Design Consultant and Project Director Procurement for the Batlow MPS project.

"This team will be responsible for detailed planning, document design and delivery of the project. It is expected that planning will be completed by June 2006 and that the project will go to tender for construction by July 2006."

He said if members of the Concerned Citizens of Tumut Shire wished to discuss this matter further, they should be encouraged to contact Mary Smit, Manager Tumut Health Service on 69471555.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, December 13

"Man with the clipboard cometh"

Sir, - Re the letter received from Greater Southern Area Health Service Acting Chief Executive, Nigel Lyons in response to a petition sent by the citizens of Tumut Shire on November 3, 2005, to the Director General of NSW Public Health.

Unfortunately, there is no change to their position which still points to the Tumut Health Service Plan as the saviour of Tumut District Hospital. Again, the letter is couched in "bureauspeak". I offer the following as a rough translation for those unable or unwilling to spend time deciphering the terminology, without meaning 'any disrespect.

The man with clipboard cometh to measure up what size bandaids to use and where to stick them on our hospital so that it will last a bit longer. He will write a report for health managers next March.

A public meeting will be held in five or six months time to tell the public what he said. Next year, GSAHS will develop a plan to manage all their hospitals and

centres. As part of this, more men with clipboards will audit Tumut then compare notes with the first clipboard man's results.

Re our concerns about access and affordability of medical imaging, especially ultrasound - no change. (Like it or lump it.) Re Batlow Hospital, tenders for construction are expected to be issued by July 2006." (Some good news at last!)

Our letters referred to the decay of our district hospitals. We have now been vindicated in no uncertain terms.

Two letters in your paper on Friday, December 9, titled "The State of our Local Hospital" point to evidence that Tumut Hospital is indeed crumbling, with an extensive area of rotten floorboards revealed. I have seen this area, located next to the solarium, and am quite shocked. I too, encourage individuals and community group representatives to view this and contact their elected representatives in local, state and federal governments.

As secretary of the newly formed No More Bandaid Solutions Inc. may I comment on Rhonda Blunt's excellent letter.

Our organisation is lobbying for an immediate commitment from the NSW State Government to fund a new hospital- now, not in the long term.

We do deplore large amounts of money being spent on yet more renovations to shirk the responsibility of building a new hospital. However, we are very much in favour of, in fact we demand, that any deficiencies in the buildings which are the cause of risk or danger be fixed immediately. The obvious case of dry rot, which I suspect may be extensive, should be dealt with asap. It is a disgrace that this has been allowed to occur unnoticed.

By asking for the government to allocate funding for a new hospital, we are not asking them to rob other hospitals, or to use money needed for repairs to Tumut Hospital.

We are asking the NSW State Govt. to bite the bullet, admit an error has been made and start the process of building a new hospital at Tumut now. It is not impossible. The money for a new hospital would come initially from general revenue, a decision for Treasury and the

Government.

I repeat, NSW is not broke.

Our state government can make a decision to allocate enough money to build a new hospital at Tumut, just as it can decide to fund roads, desalination plants, harbour side projects, art galleries, you name it.

It is totally unrealistic to expect a growing economy such as Tumut to put up with a rotting, antiquated rabbit warren for a hospital which I repeat, is a danger to the public, patients and staff who work so hard in such pathetic conditions for our benefit.

Happy Christmas Tumut Hospital staff. I like the Chrissie decorations on the dry rot guards.

A mistake has been made. It needs to be fixed now. We are not interested in the blame game. We have new State Govt. leaders. All we ask is that they take another, harder look at Tumut and show us what they're made of.

Yours etc. Sue Swann Secretary, No More Bandaid Solutions Inc., PO Box 491, Tumut 2720
fixitnow@tpg.com.au
www.nomorebandaids.homestead.com

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, December 13

Hospital like the lost Atlantis?

Sir, - I also inspected the gaping hole in the Tumut Hospital where once a floor existed. I am wondering if our hospital, along with patients, visitors and staff is suddenly, like the lost Atlantis, going to disappear from sight, never to be seen again, leaving generations of Australians searching for some sign that a Tumut hospital did, in fact, at one time exist on this site.

Yours etc. Timaeus
(Name and address supplied, but withheld by request)

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, December 13

Assurances given on flooring replacement

In recent days No More Bandaid Solutions Inc, a newly formed community group fighting for improved rural health facilities, inspected an area of Tumut District Hospital which the group said was clearly in a critical state of disrepair.

The group said flooring in a corridor adjacent to the solarium of the hospital showed obvious signs

of dry rot with split beams and crumbling wood.

Following representations to the NSW Minister for Health requesting urgent attention to the matter, the group has now received an assurance that a new floor will be in place before Christmas.

No More Bandaid Solutions Inc expressed their appreciation that the problem will be fixed so quickly. "Thank you Minister, and all those who helped. That's what we call leadership," said a spokesperson. "Happy Christmas".

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, December 16

Exciting times ahead for Adelong-Batlow MPS

THE Adelong/Batlow MPS Committee met with Mr Chin Young from Rice Daubney, the appointed architect to design the new Adelong/Batlow MPS, last week.

The MPS committee and Batlow Hospital staff had a chance to view the first MPS draft plan and to make comments and changes.

Over the next few months there will be further consultation and discussions with community members, hospital staff, MPS committee members and GSAHS representatives before the final plan is submitted and approved for the building of the Adelong/Batlow MPS.

The Adelong/Batlow MPS development will run concurrently with Junee and Berrigan's MPS. A Steering committee has been set up to oversee these three GSAHS MPS projects.

The committee consists of Rice Daubney, the project director and principle design consultant, various GSAHS representatives, the health service managers and an MPS committee member from all three sites.

The Adelong/Batlow MPS committee has worked long and hard in conjunction with GSAHS to get the Adelong/Batlow MPS off the ground and to its current stage.

The chairperson, Diana Droscher, said, "It's an exciting time for the Adelong and Batlow communities as they will actually see some progress and hopefully see the first sod of soil turned over before the end of 2006."

The tender is planned to go out

in August 2006, award the contract in October 2006, and construction should commence at the end of October 2006.

During this period it is expected that the Adelong Community Health Centre will receive it's long awaited upgrade. The expected completion of the Adelong/Batlow MPS is within 12 months of commencement of construction, so by the end of 2007.

If any community member has any questions about the Adelong/Batlow MPS they can contact an MPS committee member or the Acting Health Service Manager Colleen Power at Batlow Hospital.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2005, December 20

Rotted floorboards fixed. Hospital refutes claim.

Hospital denies work was carried out due to lobby group calls.

Repairs to rotted-out flooring at Tumut Hospital were carried out under the hospital's ongoing maintenance and repairs plan according to Health Services manager Mary Smit.

Mrs Smit has refuted claims that a newly formed group calling themselves "No More Bandaid Solutions Inc" was responsible for the floor repairs.

"The floor was not fixed as a result of representations made to the NSW Minister for Health by the lobby group "No More Bandaid Solutions Inc", it was fixed because it was broken."

Mrs Smit said the problem in the floor was identified about three weeks ago by hospital maintenance personnel and was immediately referred to Greater Southern Health.

"On the day I spoke to the engineer, that same day someone was out doing a quote," Mrs Smit said.

Mrs Smit said she wants to assure the general public that the hospital will be kept in as good repair as possible until the Health Service Plan comes into play.

"We know that there are things that need fixing and the building is wearing out, but we are fixing things as required," Mrs Smit said.

"Yes, we do want a new hospital but we have to go through the correct procedures.

"In the meantime we do have to have the "bandaids" because even if

we got the money today, we still have to function in the present hospital until the new one is constructed.

The area of repaired flooring which is located in a corridor adjacent to the hospital solarium was fully functional yesterday.

The ageing state of Tumut Hospital has been in the local spotlight recently during development of a Health Service Plan by the Tumut Local Government Area Health Service Planning Committee.

No More Bandaaid Solutions Inc is a newly formed community group, which is lobbying for a new Tumut Hospital.

The Daily Advertiser,
Wagga Wagga
2005, December 21

Minister confirms Wagga priority.

A non committal response by the Minister for Health, John Hatzistergos, to questions raised in State Parliament in relation to a future redevelopment of the Tumut Hospital has been labelled "pathetic" by Member for Burrinjuck, Katrina Hodgkinson.

Ms Hodgkinson had raised four questions in relation to the local hospital including whether the Minister would consider a reprioritisation of its redevelopment.

The answer for all four questions was given in one response saying "NSW Health and the Greater Southern Area Health Service advises that the redevelopment of Wagga Base hospital is a priority due to its critical role on the Area.

WaggaWagga Hospital is the largest health service facility in the region and provides a range of specialist services for people throughout the region."

Ms Hodgkinson described the response as "pathetic" and was unimpressed that the answer did not mention Tumut Hospital once.

It is simply not good enough to have a hospital in such urgent need of redevelopment in a town which is growing, such as Tumut," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"Private companies and Industry want to set up business and invest in Tumut, yet the Government is not willing to provide up-to-date Infrastructure" she said.

Ms Hodgkinson visited Tumut Hospital while she was in town on

Tuesday and said she would continue to support demands by local residents for a major redevelopment of the hospital.

In Parliament Ms Hodgkinson had asked for confirmation that the redevelopment of Tumut Hospital has been given a lower priority than that of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, as advised by Greater Southern Area Health Services Manger of Services, Janet Chapman, at the public meeting in Tumut on November 8.

Ms Hodgkinson also asked:

- If the decision to put an upgrade of Tumut Hospital behind Wagga Wagga, Young, Quenbeyan and Junee was taken by the Area Health Service or at Ministerial level.
- If the reason behind this decision, given the Tumut Hospital building is 40 years older than Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. and
- If a reprioritisation of the redevelopment would be considered in light of significant community concerns.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2006, January 20

October MPS start

WORK on the long awaited Adelong/Batlow MPS project is finally expected to start in October this year, with completion planned for the end of 2007.

During this period it is also expected the Adelong Community Health Centre will receive its \$250,000 upgrade, which has also been long awaited.

The tender for the MPS replacement for the Batlow Hospital, which will be built on a greenfields site using former railway land, is expected to go out in August, and the contract awarded in October, the MPS committee has been told.

The MPS steering committee chairperson, Diana Droscher was one of those who attended a meeting at Berrigan last week, along with Mr Chon Young from Rice Daubney, the appointed architect to design the Adelong/Batlow MPS, and Steve butt, manager of Asset Management of GSAHS, and other GSAHS representatives.

Also present were representatives from the Junee and Berrigan MPS Project Steering Committees, as all three projects are running concurrently.

It was the third such meeting with the architect and saw the third Draft Plan presented to the Adelong/Batlow MPS Committee and the Batlow Hospital Staff.

The draft plan was discussed and further minor changes have been made, however the final draft plan is taking shape and according to the steering committee is looking good.

Following the positive comments about the draft plan from both hospital staff and the MPS Committee the draft plan has now gone on public exhibition.

The draft plan can be viewed at the Batlow Hospital and Adelong/Batlow residents are being encouraged to have a look at the draft plan and make comment.

The project includes 10 hostel beds, 8 nursing home beds, one respite bed, one palliative care bed and four acute care beds.

That compares with the six nursing home beds and six acute care beds in the existing hospital.

The new MPS will also incorporate a relocated Batlow Ambulance Station, accident and emergency facilities, a community health area and nurses' residence accommodation.

News of a start on the project later this year has and brought a heavy sigh of relief in many quarters.

Batlow has been agitating for a replacement for its old hospital building dating back to 1997. In 1999 the Sinclair Committee was confronted by a turnout of several hundred people in the Batlow Literary Institute

The following year the MPS was promised, and many were led to believe it would be up and running by 2003.

Less than two years ago there was concern that the \$7 million commitment for the project would not be enough to see the facility constructed to the size and standard deemed necessary (the projected cost of which is around \$10 million), but whilst there has been no official statement on that matter, the scope of the project appears to be such that the full magnitude envisaged will indeed be funded.

Meanwhile the Adelong/Batlow MPS Committee says it is also keen for community members to come forward with ideas for fundraising to raise money to purchase items for

the MPS, in order to give it a personal and homely feel, things like painting, art works, pot plants and landscaping; etc.

The MPS Committee this week acknowledged and thanked the communities effort.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2006, January

Hospital's shortcomings to be reviewed by May - GSAHS

Greater Southern Area Health Service has committed to achieving a number of recommendations relating to Tumut Hospital outlined in the recently completed Tumut Health Service Plan.

The service plan was finalised in November following a public consultation process and included a number of recommendations.

Dr Nigel Lyons, Acting Chief Executive of GSAHS, has advised the local committee overseeing the services plan that GSAHS is committed to achieving the plan's recommendations.

They include a comprehensive review of the hospital and emergency department by May.

From the review, a master plan will be prepared outlining short and medium term solutions to the current shortfall in the physical environment in Tumut Hospital's emergency department.

Dr Lyons noted that a new surgical services network will be rolled out during 2006. This will provide clinical staff with opportunities for enhanced training, clinical rotation, outreach support and an increase in the use of telemedicine.

Dr Lyons has also committed GSAHS to review the relocation of maternity services, to be completed by May.

The issue of a new hospital for Tumut has been included in the GSAHS Asset Strategic Plan and Dr Lyons has assured the committee that a facility review and master plan will be completed by May 2006.

"It is expected that the asset strategic plan will confirm the requirement for a major upgrade at the Tumut Health Serviced and GSAHS will request that Tumut be included on the NSW Capital Works program as a priority project," Dr Lyons stated.

Short-term refurbishment works

will be completed by the end of 2006, according to Dr Lyons.

Meanwhile, at a local level the Tumut Health Service Manager Mary Smit and Tumut Community Health Service Manager, Jill Ludford, are working on a number of clinical projects.

They include a multidisciplinary approach to diabetes, improved case management services, training in chronic disease management and development an interagency approach to mental illness. Details of these projects will be announced soon.

The Tumut managers will also be involved in the development of a web based service directory, which will complement one of the recommendations of the Tumut Shire Social Plan.

GSAHS is currently processing applications for the new Local Health Service Advisory Board and the future monitoring of goals and targets of the Health Service Plan will be reviewed after the announcement of the formation of this new lobby group.

Tumut & Adelong Times
2006, January 20

"We will continue to push for a new hospital" - Secretary, No More Bandaid Solutions Inc

Sir, Congratulations go to the NSW State Government who have now expedited construction of a new hospital at Batlow costing \$10m and allocated \$250,000 for the refurbishment of the medical centre at Adelong.

No More Bandaid Solutions Inc. also welcomes the announcement of a grant of \$250,000 by the NSW State Government to Tumut Hospital as part of its Rural Health Minor Works Program.

The money is to "improve access and security issues" and work is due to be implemented by June 2006. (We understand that a security guard is now on duty at Tumut Hospital during night hours.)

Any funding which will alleviate the deplorable state of Tumut District Hospital is welcomed.

However, this organisation asserts that funding for minor works, although needed, is still a bandaid solution.

Despite over 12 months dialogue with the Tumut community and the release of the Tumut Health

Services Plan 2006-2011, we are still waiting for the government to make a firm commitment to replace our community's 107 year old hospital in the near future. The report makes no such commitment.

We call on the government to follow the lead of business and industry who are currently investing heavily in expansion and new development in the Tumut district.

Some of the developments, such as retirement villages and nursing homes cannot go ahead without the security of knowing that their clients will have adequate medical services provided by the public health system, including a modern, safe hospital.

The current state of Tumut Hospital is neither modern nor safe according to the government's own bureaucrats.

There is little or no change to the plight of patients in the Tumut district who still have to travel hundreds of kilometres for expensive radiology tests despite the purchase of a new ultrasound machine for Wagga Wagga Base Hospital.

Our organisation still questions the equity of distribution of resources within the GSAHS, especially the prioritisation of towns to receive new hospitals and the allocation of radiology equipment and services.

No More Bandaid Solutions Inc. will hold its first meeting for 2006 this week and will continue to push for a new hospital at Tumut.

Anyone interested in joining the campaign can obtain further information from www.nomorebandaids.homestead.com or write to PO Box 491, Tumut NSW 2720.

Yours etc. Sue Swann,
Secretary, No More Bandaid Solutions Inc., PO Box 491, Tumut NSW 2720, e-mail: fixitnow@tpg.com.au

Tumut & Adelong Times
2006 March 7

The sickly state of our hospitals.

Leaky roofs, lack of space and asbestos place patients and staff in real danger.

By Linda Silmalis

Surgeons in NSW hospitals are being forced to cancel operations because of leaky operating theatres, broken air-conditioning and unsafe

working conditions.

The Opposition has demanded a State-wide audit of the condition of hospitals amid concerns that staff and patients are being placed at risk.

An investigation by The Sunday Telegraph found regional hospitals to be in the worst state. Many have asbestos, plumbing and space problems.

Opposition health spokeswoman Jillian Skinner said the condition of some hospitals was affecting staff.

"As well as there not being enough money for surgery, it's clear there isn't enough money to equip hospitals and keep them up to scratch," Ms Skinner said.

"The buildings are decaying and often left without repairs, so that doctors and other staff are working in often dangerous conditions."

At Bega Hospital, four WorkCover improvement notices have been issued about unsafe working conditions.

The hospital's director of critical care, Dr Gabriel Khouri, said operations were often cancelled because of faulty equipment, leaks in the operating theatre or broken air-conditioners. This put patients at risk of infection.

The 50-year-old hospital handles more than 2500 cases a year, including orthopedic work.

Dr Khouri said its operating theatres did not meet national orthopedic guidelines or operating room nurse standards.

"The system is already past breaking point, and infrastructure is falling down around us," he said.

"The theatre ceiling leaks when it rains heavily, and the air-conditioner repeatedly fails to maintain the temperature at a tolerable level. Staff continually trip over wet floors and electrical cables.

"Without a major upgrade to hospital theatres, surgical services will collapse under the weight of its workload, inadequate infrastructure and funding."

Dr Khouri said two operations had been cancelled last week because of the risk of infection to patients when airconditioners broke down.

He added that two of the hospital's three surgeons were ready to quit.

Dr Khouri said a letter expressing his concerns had been sent to Health Minister John

Hatzistergos in January but had not been acknowledged.

Staff at Tumut Hospital have been awaiting an upgrade since 1995. The hospital is full of leaks, has holes in walls and floors, and lacks space.

Staff at Batlow Hospital claim the building contains asbestos. At Narrabri Hospital, surgery is cancelled or delayed when airconditioners break down.

Roof leaks at Hornsby Hospital leave water 15cm deep on the way to surgery.

Mr Hatzistergos said the State Government had spent a record \$3.7 billion on health capital works projects.

"Over the next four years, we have committed another \$2.5 billion," he said.

Planned works include rebuilding Batlow Hospital and expanding Narrabri Hospital's emergency department.

The Sunday Telegraph
2006, March 26

Good news for Sydney, Wagga can wait.

By Ben Smee

Hospital waiting list. State govt approves \$300 million hospital for Northern Beaches, while new Wagga Base will remain bogged down in planning until 2009. Sydney gets new hospital, not us.

While Wagga Base Hospital waits, Sydney gets brand new facility. Construction will not begin on the new Wagga Base Hospital for three years, but Sydney will have another fully operational, state-of-the-art hospital in 2010.

Health minister John Hatzistergos yesterday announced plans for a new \$300 million Northern Beaches hospital at Sydney's Frenchs Forest, with construction set to begin in the second half of next year.

In contrast, the long-awaited Wagga Base Hospital is bogged down in a planning process that is not likely to end until 2009, despite being on the agenda of various state governments for more than 20 years.

Wagga Mayor Kerry Pascoe questioned whether politics had played a part in the decision to build the new Frenchs Forest hospital.

"It does deeply concern me when Wagga is in great need of a new hospital," Cr Pascoe said.

"It seems to be the state government doing what they usually do and giving to the metropolitan areas"

Cr Pascoe said that he had discussions with Greater Southern Area Health Service chief executive Stuart Schneider, and he understood that the process was still on track for the new Wagga Base Hospital.

Wagga MP Daryl Maguire said that the government could not possibly achieve its goals for the Frenchs Forest hospital.

"They've done no planning Wagga is far more advanced and moving on to the next stage," Mr Maguire said.

"A lot of work has gone into our plans (for Wagga Base) ... we will continue to work towards the building of our hospital," Mr Maguire said.

Speaking at the press conference yesterday, Mr Hatzistergos described the planning process as "a very complex task".

Representatives from the Greater Southern Area Health Service were unwilling to comment yesterday, saying they could not make comparisons between Wagga Base and the Frenchs Forest proposal.

Daily Advertiser,
Wagga Wagga
2006, March 31

Queanbeyan hospital on track. \$30m work to begin soon.

By Danielle Cronin Health Reporter

Work is on track to build a new \$30 million Queanbeyan hospital and emergency department staff are preparing to risk blisters and physical exhaustion to do their part.

Member for Monaro Steve Whan, said yesterday that preliminary work had begun on the three-storey hospital that would "hugely boost" bed numbers from 37 to 60.

This would mean more elective surgery would be performed at Queanbeyan, which would help stem the flow of patients to the ACT and reduce workloads for Canberra and Calvary hospitals.

Administration staff would move out of the old building in about a month so it could be demolished to make way for the new hospital.

Staff from the Queanbeyan Hospital's emergency department will do their part tomorrow.

Three hospital staff and one paramedic will take part in the 42.4km Canberra marathon after five months of training.

One of the runners, Paul Green, said yesterday the team wanted to raise the profile of Queanbeyan Hospital's emergency department and staff who worked there. "We're also hoping to raise funds for small items requested by staff and patients," he said.

Meanwhile, another team of medics has taken complaints about the Goulburn Base Hospital directly to NSW Health Minister John Hatzistergos.

Member for Burrinjuck Katrina Hodgkinson, Dr Jarvis Hayman, Dr Kerrie MacDonald and pathologist Alistair Stewart met the minister recently.

The key concerns centred on ineffective use of operating theatres, cuts to funding, the need for more nursing staff and failure to replace one of three surgeons who retired more than six years ago.

Ms Hodgkinson said, "Local doctors are concerned at the excessive time it has taken to appoint a third surgeon, following the retirement of Dr Hayman.

"This has placed a significant strain on the two existing surgeons.

"We also expressed our concern that the practice of employing temporary agency nurses at a cost of up to \$10,000 a week was a serious drain on the local health budget and that more effort should be put into recruiting nurses to fill vacant positions on a permanent basis."

A spokesman for Mr Hatzistergos said yesterday management was currently assessing applications from at least two surgeons interested in working at Goulburn Base Hospital.

"In the meantime, the area health service is contracting a locum surgeon to be on call," he said.

The minister had promised to provide a response to the delegation, plus overseas recruitment of doctors and nurses, and a review of surgical services and the implications for Goulburn.

In January, almost 4000 people were waiting for elective surgery at hospitals throughout the Greater

Southern Area Health Service, encompassing the Monaro, South Coast and Southern Tablelands.

The Canberra Times

The push for a new Tumut Hospital by the newly formed local group

No More Bandaid Solutions Inc. has recently received a boost from local residents.

Group spokesperson Sue Swann said that two ventures, a fundraiser, and a petition to local council, have been overwhelmingly supported by locals.

"I wish to sincerely thank everyone for their contributions and for their enthusiastic endorsement of our organisation's letter to Tumut Council."

"We are asking councillors to make this issue a high priority of Council and to lobby government long and hard on our behalf," she said.

"I have spoken with hundreds of residents in recent weeks and there is no doubt that there is deep concern in the community about the state of our 107 yr old hospital. People want it rebuilt now, rather than refurbished. They are worried about having to wait until after Wagga Wagga Base Hospital is finished before we get a look in," she said.

Mrs Swann said that amongst a number of issues raised by locals with the organisation was the closure of Sheahan House.

"Some of the 36 women who are attending antenatal classes have expressed their dissatisfaction with the maternity unit. They are apparently worried that birthing facilities are insufficient if several of them are ready to give birth at the same time," she said.

"Lack of privacy, the risk of cross infection, the 'medicalisation' of a natural process and lack of space were other matters raised," she said.

NMBS is set to continue the campaign in coming weeks with a breakfast meeting being organised for local business operators to discuss the economic implications of the situation. Mrs Swann warned that the long delay in providing Tumut with. A new hospital is likely to have a severe effect on our economy

"I believe Tumut is at a crossroads," she said.

"Many people are not joining the dots, and the result could be disas-

trous for our town's economy if we all leave it for somebody else to act," she warned.

"Currently there are development projects totalling almost 1 billion dollars in and around Tumut in various stages of planning. Some retirement village projects which need access to good medical facilities (including an up to date hospital) have been frozen by the government. We need to be proactive and fight for our right to decent health facilities, including a new hospital. Other towns such as Queanbeyan, Goulburn, Junee and Wagga Wagga are actively lobbying government for health dollars, successfully in some cases.

"Tumut needs to lift its game and lobby loudly and - persistently if we are to have any hope of success," she said.

Mrs Swann said that reports circulating in Tumut last week that Wagga Base was "on hold" are incorrect. Planning for the \$200m replacement of the hospital, the largest teaching hospital west of Sydney, is underway but due to the complexity of the project, completion is not expected for upwards of another 10 yrs.

The confusion arose following the announcement that a new \$300m hospital to be built at French's Forest in one of the wealthy areas of Sydney's north shore will be up and running before Wagga Base.

Wagga Wagga Base Hospital is also to receive \$400,000 for kidney dialysis machines, doubling the present capacity. Construction of the \$30m new hospital at Queanbeyan announced only months ago is about to commence.

"NMBS welcomes all these announcements for new hospitals," said Mrs Swann.

"However, the news is not good for Tumut. Yet again, we are set to receive crumbs (\$250,000) for patch up renovations to our 100yr old hospital. The poor old girl is set to get another makeover job!

"We love her dearly but we all know a new hat and a bit of lippy will not change the fact that she's past her use-by date," she said.

Mrs Swann said that country people should not constantly be pushed down the line in preference to wealthy metropolitan suburbs already generously catered for.

She warned that the economic

implications are in her view serious and urged the people of Tumut to stop "talking over the back fence" and start actively lobbying councillors, service clubs, politicians, media and health authorities.

"During the last council elections, aged care facilities for Tumut district was a hot issue," said Mrs Swann.

"Since then, the government has frozen development applications for aged care facilities (e.g. retirement villages) in rural areas because they know rural hospitals are not in a fit state to sustain such projects. That freeze applies to Tumut, and rightly so. We have numerous developers wanting to build in Tumut. "Will these developers wait upwards of 10 yrs?"

According to the statistics, Tumut currently leads all other small towns and is growing, not declining.

"If we are to keep our healthy economy on track, and not waste the hard work of so many to build industry over the past decade, it is essential that our aged hospital be rebuilt now, not in 10 yrs time," she said.

"No More Bandaid Solutions Inc. whom I represent is currently getting together a petition to Tumut Shire Council.

"We want Councillors left in no doubt as to what this community thinks about submitting to health authority plans which mean we will wait many years for our hospital to be replaced. The full text of our letter is with each petition in many Tumut businesses.

"I urge people who want our council to give this matter the highest priority, and to lobby hard on our behalf for a new hospital as soon as possible, to sign the petition," she said.

"My message to the government is simple. Give Tumut a new hospital - now, not in ten years time. If you can afford \$300 million for the wealthy of Sydney, you can spare \$30 million for Tumut from petty cash."

Tumut & Adelong Times
2006, April 13

Advertisement

Does Tumut Need a New Hospital?

"The condition of the Tumut District Hospital and Community Health buildings is very poor and has a direct influence on the ability of the health service to provide safe, efficient and accessible services."

(Greater Southern Area Health Service. NSW Health. Tumut Health Service Plan 2006-2011, page 54.)

NO MORE BANDAID
SOLUTIONS INC.

P.O. Box 491, Tumut NSW 2720

e-mail: fixitnow@tpg.com.au

Web site:

www.nomorebandaids.homestead.com

Tumut & Adelong Times
2006, April 13

1800 Sign Hospital Petition

A petition signed by 1800 people calling for support for the rebuilding of Tumut's 107 year old hospital as a priority, will be presented to Mayor Gene Vanzella on Monday night.

The petition was launched by local action group No More Bandaid Solutions Inc., in frustration there is no end in sight to the problems it says is being experienced by Tumut district residents accessing public health services.

It urges the Council to make a new hospital a high priority and to lobby the government and health authorities on behalf of the people who depend on it.

Organisers of the petition say they have been overwhelmed by the response and that they are in no doubt now as to their having a mandate for the campaign for a new hospital now, rather than the lengthy wait under the health dept's planning schedule.

Secretary of NMBS Inc. and co-ordinator of the petition Sue Swann said she was bombarded with messages of encouragement and wished to thank everybody for their support.

She extended an invitation to all who signed the petition to witness it being handed to Mayor Gene Vanzella at the Tumut Shire Council Chambers at approximately 4.45 p.m. on Monday.

The presentation will be made by President of No More Bandaid Solutions Inc. Kevin Swann who

will address Councillors on behalf of those who endorsed the petition.

Mrs Swann said that the original issue which sparked the campaign for a new hospital, namely the privatisation of ultrasound in the area's public hospitals was still a major problem.

"In September 2005 it was announced that an ultrasound machine worth \$300,000 was on order for Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. Some months ago, the machine arrived but as of today, it is still not operational due to staffing "problems", she said.

"It's still probably in its cardboard box," said Mrs Swann.

"There has been no change for the people from this district," she said.

"People are still having to travel hundreds of kms via private transport, still having to pay up front, still not getting bulk billing," said Mrs Swann.

"And when it is operational, given the demands on the machine, there is no way it will make any difference to the people of Tumut and other districts in the region who are out-patients.

"We need a new hospital with our own medical imaging clinic, including an ultrasound machine.

"If its viable at Cooma and Young, it's viable at Tumut," she said.

"My fear is that medical imaging is in the process of being privatised within the public health system in this region. In my view this will not serve the community well," she said.

"It is all very well for those who can afford to pay the high cost of private medical services and who have private health insurance. But what about Mr and Mrs

Average and pensioners who are struggling to keep pace with rising food and fuel costs in country NSW; without the luxury of public transport?"

As part of the campaign for a new hospital, No More Bandaid has already written numerous letters to politicians and health authorities advocating the installation of new technology for medical imaging in public hospitals.

The group has pointed out the technology, already in use in Western Australia and other parts of the world, allows data to be exchanged electronically to distant

locations for expert medical opinions.

"This could revolutionise the way in which medicine is practised in rural areas in this country," said Mrs Swann.

"It could free small towns like Tumut, Adelong, and Batlow from having to depend on private operators who seek to monopolise particular services and who are governed by the profit margins.

"The public health system is meant to provide a comprehensive service for everyone, rich or poor.

"If sections of the public system are privatised, what happens to those who cannot afford a private company's charges and conditions?"

According to NMBS Inc. other small hospitals in the region such as Young and Cooma have their own ultrasound machines.

The group maintains that Tumut, with a larger surrounding population to draw on, could more than adequately sustain an ultrasound service at a new Tumut hospital.

They claim that with proper planning, ongoing costs to the public system could be reduced and the community could benefit from an affordable, accessible, and reliable medical diagnostic service to the area.

"The question has to be asked, has the privatisation of medical imaging at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital and within the Greater Southern Area Health Service served the community well to date?" said Mrs Swann.

In our opinion, 'No', given the problems we have highlighted over the past year," said a spokesperson from NMBS Inc.

"If medical imaging is privatised in public hospitals, particularly if it is limited to one private company, expect higher prices, delayed reporting times and limited access and services to continue."

What the petition says

We the undersigned wish to express our dissatisfaction with the current state of Tumut District Hospital buildings which we believe are inefficient, inappropriate, unsafe and in urgent need replacement.

We request that Council take up this cause on our behalf with the government of New South Wales and its health administrators as a matter of urgency.

The sustainability of our present and future economic development depends on the people of Tumut district having access to a modern and safe hospital appropriate to our needs. We maintain that the present hospital needs urgent replacement.

This community and local government has worked hard over the past decade to build a vibrant and growing local economy which is a leader of small towns in rural New South Wales. Our population is growing, our industries are expanding, our towns are a hub of activity. The current timetable for a new hospital as set down by Greater Southern Area Health Service, we believe will undo all that hard work and will jeopardise the economy of this shire.

The pioneers of this district who built our hospital 107 years ago did not skimp on the project. They built the best hospital in the region which attracted doctors to it. These doctors then remained in the district and served the people of Tumut well.

We respectfully ask that Tumut Shire Council make the replacement of Tumut District Hospital with a modern, safe and efficient building which our community can be proud of as a top priority of Council.

Tumut & Adelong Times
April 21, 2006

Tumut Shire to lobby for new hospital

Tumut Shire Council is fed up with the condition of the town's 107-year old hospital and will lobby the state government for a new hospital.

A petition signed by 1800 people was handed to council by No More Bandaid Solutions president Kevin Swann. The petition labelled Tumut District Hospital as inefficient, inappropriate, unsafe and in urgent need of replacement.

Mr Swann said the economy of Tumut had grown with investment from the forestry industry but with out a new hospital its expansion could be jeopardised.

The group said under the current timetable set out by the Greater Southern Area Health Service, the town's new hospital could be ten years away from being completed.

The Daily Advertiser
April 26 2006

Council backs push for new hospital.

Organisers of No More Bandaid Solutions, a group pushing for a new Tumut Hospital, will meet this week with business, medical, and community representatives to plan the next phase of their campaign.

Under discussion will be the unanimous decision by Tumut Shire Councillors last week to back the campaign and to lobby the State Government for funding for a new hospital.

Tumut NMBS spokesperson Sue Swann said the group was delighted with the support pledged by Tumut Council and are keen to see an early start to delegations to Parliament House and an active lobbying process by Councillors.

A petition signed by 1800 residents of the Tumut district was presented to Deputy Mayor James Hayes by president of local group No More Bandaid Solutions Inc., Kevin Swann, at the council's monthly meeting last Tuesday night.

The petition pointed to the poor state of Tumut District Hospital buildings as being "inefficient, inappropriate, unsafe and in urgent need of replacement," and asked Council to take up the issue with the State Government as a matter of urgency.

Council general manager Chris Adams expressed some misgivings about the "language" contained in the petition at last Tuesday's meeting' describing it as "quite strong."

Mr Adams said he needed clear direction from the councilors regarding the council's role in the push for a new hospital.

"We have been working with the Greater Southern Area Health Service on this issue through its health service advisory council do we continue to work with that body, or abandon that process and go down this new path" Mr Adams said.

"The petition states this council should take this matter on as a top priority - does that mean we drop everything else until we have a new hospital?"

Ultimately, councilors voted for the council to begin lobbying the state government for a new hospital, in conjunction with the council's involvement with the GSAHS advisory council, in a resolution Mr

Adams said was "entirely appropriate".

Meanwhile, this week's No More Band Aids campaign meeting will concentrate on the economic aspects of the issue and the likely implications for Tumut's industries and business operators.

Richard Pratt, Chairman of Visy Industries and one of Australia's leading businessmen, has already endorsed the campaign.

According to statistics, Tumut currently leads small towns in the region and continues to grow, offering a unique opportunity for investors and developers, especially those seeking a "tree change".

"All that is needed for that to happen is for the NSW Government to invest in our health infrastructure, now, not in ten years time," said spokesperson for NMBS Inc., Sue Swann.

"The people of Sydney would not expect to have to travel to Gosford or Newcastle without public transport for basic medical services.

"So why should the people of Tumut have to put up with it, especially as fuel prices rise? We urgently need a new hospital," she said.

"Easy access to affordable ultrasound and other medical imaging continues to be a problem for Tumut district residents, especially for low income earners."

NMBS Inc. says it has also been approached by several residents with grave concerns about conditions at the hospital, especially maternity facilities.

"Young mothers are repeatedly calling for the re-opening of Sheahan House to overcome some of the problems in the short term," said Mrs Swann.

However, NMBS Inc. acknowledges that whilst this would address many of the issues such as privacy, space, cross infection risk and proximity to general wards, it would not solve the lack of obstetrics and anaesthetist services.

A new hospital, properly designed and equipped with modern facilities would help attract doctors with those skills to the district who were prepared to stay, said Mrs Swann.

"As the Tumut Health Service Plan emphasises, an integrated approach to the provision of medical services is needed. The provision of

a new, modern hospital is vital to the success of that plan," she said. "Bandaid solutions are a waste of time and money. We have been patient long enough."

This week's hospital campaign meeting will discuss all of the above issues and more. Any member of the community who wishes to raise a specific issue with the campaign team can contact the secretary, Sue Swann on 02 6947 2084 or use other contacts at www.nomore-bandaidshomestead.com.

Tumut & Adelong Times
May 2 2006

Local group continues to lobby for new hospital

At its meeting last Wednesday night, local lobby group No More Bandaid Solutions Inc. laid the foundations for the next stage of the campaign to build a new hospital in Tumut.

The group will focus on liaising with local councillors as they begin to actively lobby State Government ministers.

NMBS Inc. will also set up a dialogue with local business operators and peak industry groups in coming weeks with a view to raising awareness about the economic aspects of the issue.

A report detailing the economic progress of the district over the past decade, and the likely impact on the economy should a new hospital not be provided in the near future, is being compiled for distribution to State Government, industry groups and health authorities.

The report, which details statistics showing Tumut has been leading small towns in rural NSW, will also be made available to interested members of the general public.

Statistics supplied by Tumut Shire Council show that investment and development estimated at between \$750 million and \$1 billion is currently in various stages of planning for the Tumut district.

"A new hospital is vital to this development proceeding," said a spokesperson for the lobby group.

The urgency of the need for a new hospital was underlined during the meeting as members heard disturbing information passed on by members of the public.

It was clear to those at the meeting that many residents,

especially low income earners, the frail and elderly, are experiencing difficulty in accessing affordable medical services. Ultrasound is still a huge problem with no solution in sight yet.

The meeting was told that the new \$300,000 ultrasound machine ordered for Wagga Wagga Base Hospital last September had arrived many months ago, but was still not operational.

It was claimed that even when up and running, due to the demand on its services, it would make no difference to the plight of Tumut Shire residents who would still be forced to attend private clinics in Wagga Wagga and Canberra:

"This presents severe financial difficulty for many people who will still have to pay up front fees and use private transport," said the group's spokesperson.

Difficulties being experienced by local families using the maternity ward at Tumut Hospital were also discussed at the meeting and described as "disgraceful".

According to some local expectant mothers, there are currently 18 women scheduled to give birth at Tumut Hospital in coming months and with a number due at the same time and there were worries at what will happen if two or more of them start labour simultaneously since there is only one fully equipped delivery room.

With no local anaesthetist available, the women say they are unable to have epidurals or emergency Caesars. They also face a long, bumpy 100 kilo metre dash in an ambulance to Wagga Wagga mid labour, should they experience problems or should both obstetricians be unavailable to deliver their babies," said the spokesperson.

Other problems mentioned at the meeting included lack of space and privacy, noisy shared rooms, infectious patients being located next to newborns and their mothers, lack of security, proximity to general wards, risk of cross infection, proximity to mentally ill in-patients, problems with aftercare for those who give birth in Wagga Wagga and other sensitive issues.

The cost of transporting patients to Canberra by air ambulance and to Wagga Wagga via road ambulance was cited as another reason for

upgrading local medical services and facilities. It is suggested that a trip via ambulance from Tumut to Wagga Wagga currently costs approximately \$510.60 per patient to be paid by Tumut Hospital.

Helicopter from Tumut to Canberra costs \$1,785 for the first 30 minutes and thereafter \$120 for each six minutes of engine hours. The total cost is shared between Tumut Hospital and the receiving hospital in Canberra.

The actual cost of transportation is, however, much higher and is offset by sponsorship and donations from the public.

Concerns were raised about the future of the air ambulance service should Snowy Hydro, which sponsors South Care helicopter service, be sold.

Members were told that Snowy Hydro had recently renewed a five-year sponsorship of South Care helicopter service and that this would be a condition of any sale.

NMBS Inc. will investigate the exact costs to hospitals, ambulance services, and patients in the light of suggestions from the Doctors' Reform Group in Sydney which advocates the closure of small emergency units in NSW hospitals.

The newly formed lobby group of 70 academics, surgeons and physicians wants patients to be rushed by ambulance to large, specially equipped emergency units staffed with expert specialist medical teams, rather than to the nearest hospital.

"This policy should not apply to small hospitals in rural NSW," said Sue Swann, Secretary of NMBS Inc.

"It may be appropriate for some hospitals in Sydney; however, it would be entirely inappropriate for country areas. We will always need our emergency units and Level 3 hospitals in country NSW," she said.

A history of the issue, including 61 newspaper articles is available on www.nomorebandaids.homestead.com

Tumut & Adelong Times
May 9 2006

Report 'on economy aimed at adding weight to campaign for a new Tumut hospital.

Support for the campaign to replace the 107-year-old hospital at Tumut with a new building is growing.

Local lobby group No More Bandaid Solutions Inc. has now received messages of support from the Board of the Riverina Division of GP's, Tumut Shire Council and prominent politicians.

The NSW Nurses' Association have also featured the issue in their news magazine, pointing to a range of problems. These include a bathroom being closed because the floor is lifting, bathrooms too small to accommodate walking frames and water leaks during heavy rain which necessitate the use of towels, mops and buckets.

Tumut Shire Council has recently written to the Minister for Health requesting an urgent meeting with Mayor Gene Vanzella, Councillors and staff.

That letter states that the old hospital has had "bandaid after bandaid applied over the years" and after so much time it is "no longer appropriate for the needs of a growing community."

Also highlighted is the fact that the building is in such a bad state, of repair that part of the floor collapsed recently and the building "contains substantial amounts of asbestos which makes the carrying out of repairs hazardous to the workmen and the building users."

NMBS Inc. says it fully supports these statements from the Council and is concerned that any further attempt to apply bandaids by renovating the building rather than designing and building a modern, more appropriate hospital present potential danger to both patients, staff and visitors.

It points out during past major renovations quantities of asbestos in the form of lagging around pipes hidden in walls and ceilings were found.

Asbestos sheeting and roofing in poor condition and exposed to the elements can clearly be seen at the hospital today and NMBS Inc says if disturbed by vibration or removal processes, this material could present a lethal risk.

Members of NMBS Inc. have met several times recently and say they remain of the view that unless a new hospital is built soon there will be adverse consequences for the economy of the Tumut district.

May 26 2006

Tumut & Adelong Times

Hospital works 'welcome, but stop-gap measure'.

Work is now underway at Tumut Hospital to address access and security issues under a NSW State Govt. \$250,000 Rural Health Minor Works Program.

A concrete path now links the Sheahan House carpark with Community Services and alterations have been made to the disabled carpark.

Other alterations to bathroom access and security are expected to be completed soon.

The local group lobbying for a new hospital, No More Bandaid Solutions Inc. says it welcomes any improvements to Tumut's health facilities but claims these minor works are merely bandaids.

Interestingly the NSW Nurses' Association has said in a recent edition of their news magazine, the prospect of a new hospital for Tumut seems a long way off and there is no commitment towards a new hospital in the Health Service Plan which runs until 2011.

NMBS Inc. says it is nevertheless continuing the push for a new hospital and has now launched the second phase of their campaign by commissioning a report on the district's economy.

The study, which will be compiled by an independent consultant, will examine the impact that under-resourced health services and inadequate hospital infrastructure will have on the district's social and economic structure if the situation is allowed to continue for many years.

The financial burden on rural families who have to find their way to distant regional centres for medical services without the aid of public transport will be examined as part of the report.

Both State and Federal governments have come under fire from the group for their lack of support for rural health services.

Spokesperson for the group Sue Swann claims the recent Federal budget is a slap in the face for country Australia.

"Opinion polls now confirm that two thirds of Australian families would have preferred the government to spend its surplus billions on schools, hospitals and services especially in country areas which have been allowed to slip well behind big cities," she said.

"Ten dollar handouts are an insult. The Treasurer and other politicians should come and visit Tumut and Batlow Hospitals to see how the other half lives," she said.

"Rural people need new hospitals, more doctors, more services where they live instead of having to travel hundreds of kms all the time, not hamburger tax cuts," said Mrs Swann.

The local group is continuing to warn that the people of Tumut Shire will need to take an active interest in the development of health services under the Health Service Plan which runs until 2011.

It points out public protest and numerous public meetings, other towns in this region have recently had major cuts made to their hospitals.

Both Yass and Crookwell have now lost all surgical services and Yass has also lost its maternity ward altogether, pregnant women now having to travel to Canberra to give birth, and NMBS Inc. says it is keen to ensure that the same scenario does not happen in Tumut.

"Since the closure of Sheahan House at Tumut Hospital, significant problems have developed with maternity facilities and mention is made in the Tumut Health Service Plan to 'relocating' the ward," said the spokesperson.

"It was during the 'relocation' of the maternity ward at Yass that a decision was made by a GSAHS committee to close the ward altogether.

"According to Katrina Hodgkinson, Member for Burrinjuck, Yass residents protested in their thousands, however, the final decision to close the maternity ward was made on July 13, 2005 by a meeting of 22 people, 15 of whom were employees of GSAHS.

"The identities of those who attended the meeting have apparently been kept secret to this day," said the spokesperson.

"The people of Tumut district need to take note of what has happened recently in other parts of our area health service and to learn from the experience of other towns.

"We need to insist that we receive real health dollars, not play money and bandaids. We need a new hospital and we need it now, not in 10 or 15 years time."

No More Bandaid Solutions Inc. says it is encouraging the people of Tumut district to take an active part in the development of local health services.

The lobby group is urging people to attend the public meeting organised by Greater Southern Area Health Service for at 5.30 p.m. next Tuesday (May 30) at the Tumut RSL, when a progress report on the Health Service Plan will be presented.

May 26 2006

Tumut & Adelong Times

Update on Tumut Health Service Plan next Tuesday

Greater Southern Area Health Service will host a public forum next Tuesday, May 30, to update the community on the work that has been done since the development of the Tumut Health Service Plan in November 2005.

Janet Chapman, Manager Service & Corporate Planning says GSAHS committed to providing the community with regular updates when the plan was developed.

"The development of the service plan for Tumut Health Service involved extensive community consultation. It was wonderful to see so many people interested and actively involved in the planning for their local health service.

"At this point we made a promise to the community to come back in six months and provide an update about our progress and that's exactly what we're doing," said Ms Chapman.

Mary Smit, Tumut Health Service Manager says that many recommendations from the plan have already been implemented or are currently underway.

"We have been working towards implementing recommendations from the Service plan and have already made the following progress:

- Improvements to workforce with the employment of a diabetes educator, physiotherapist, dietician and an occupational therapist who will work on falls prevention programs.

- Commenced consultation with area clinicians and chronic complex and palliative care coordinator to develop appropriate models of care for cardiac, pulmonary, chronic illness and palliative care.,

Rural health minor works program 'Keep Safe & Operating' has commenced. The focus of this program is on improving security and access across the whole site.

The Tumut Health Service public meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 30, from 5.30 p.m. at Tumut RSL Club.

This public meeting will be an opportunity for GSAHS staff from Tumut Health Service to outline the progress made to date against the commitments made in the service plan.

Ms Chapman encourages all members of the community interested in their local health service to attend.

"I encourage all members of the community to attend the meeting on May 30, to hear about the progress and work undertaken over the last 6 months," said Ms Chapman.

May 26 2006

Tumut & Adelong Times

Questions in Parliament over future of Tumut Hospital's maternity unit.

Questions over the future of maternity facilities at the Tumut Hospital have been raised in the NSW Parliament this week.

Member for Burrinjuck Katrina Hodgkinson has placed a number of questions on notice including the following:

"With reference to the 'relocation' of the maternity Ward at Tumut Base Hospital detailed in the Tumut Health Service Plan 2006-2011, will this relocation be within the hospital?"

"Has any consideration been given to closing the maternity facilities at Tumut Hospital?"

"Will you guarantee that the Maternity Ward at Tumut Hospital will not be closed as part of the implementation of the Tumut Health Service Plan 2006-2011?"

May 26 2006

Tumut & Adelong Times

Priority funding identified for Tumut.

Greater Southern Area Health Service (GSAHS) has defended recent criticisms of the condition of Tumut Hospital and has confirmed the site is a priority for redevelopment.

Manager service and corporate planning, Janet Chapman says GSAHS acknowledges the longer

term redevelopment of the Tumut Health Service (Tumut Hospital).

"The site has been identified as a priority for funding by NSW Health," Ms Chapman said.

In the meantime she said the community could be assured the Tumut Health Service is a safe environment.

"GSAHS wants to reassure people that Tumut Health Service is an active, vital, positive place," Ms Chapman said.

"We are providing services and will continue to provide services there and some work has been undertaken to improve access to the site."

"We will always commit to maintain a safe environment."

A meeting outlining progress since the development of the Tumut Health Service Plan in November 2005, is set down for tonight at 5.30pm at the Tumut RSL Club.

"I encourage members of the community to come to the meeting and hear the positive progress that has been made at the site," Ms Chapman said.

"In the short term however, \$250,000 in maintenance work has been undertaken to ensure the site remains safe and that it can continue to provide the important role it plays in the community."

By Doris Porritt

Wagga Daily Advertiser
May 30, 2006

Tumut hospital on a long waiting list.

Construction of a new hospital for Tumut is unlikely to commence until 2011 despite the existing facility being past its use-by date, a public meeting was told last night.

The public forum which was hosted by Greater Southern Area Health Service presented an update on the progress of the Tumut Health Service Plan which was developed in November 2005.

The meeting was told while much had been achieved already, they were not pretending the work being done is going to resolve all the current problems.

"A hell of a lot of work has been done over the past six months, but there is still a lot to do," chairman of the Tumut Local Government Area Health Service Planning Committee, Allan Tonkin said.

"We all know that the hospital is past its use by date and that redevelopment is a priority."

Consultant architect Ted Doufas has been engaged to undertake a facility review and develop a site master plan.

Mr Doufas said he believed it is most likely that the existing hospital site will be the site for redevelopment in the future.

"This is very much the front end, just creating a mud map as to what direction the hospital might be taking in both physical and functional aspects," he said.

Wagga Daily Advertiser
May 31, 2006

Tumut is third in line, Wagga, and Bega Hospitals 'on the books'. We're next.

A new hospital for Tumut may still be some years off, but there is light on the horizon with a public meeting this week told an architect has commenced a preliminary facility review as the first step to convince NSW Health to build the new hospital within ten years.

It was also told a new hospital in all likelihood would be built within the grounds of the current hospital's 13 acre site, which has less than a quarter of its space occupied by buildings.

In terms of the priority list Tumut remains behind a new Wagga Base Hospital which has advanced to Project Definition stage, and is expected to take at least five years to complete, and also Bega Hospital on the south coast, which, whilst some 18 months behind Wagga in terms of planning, has been officially announced as a project by NSW Health and the government

But Tuesday night's public meeting to review progress on the Tumut Health Service Plan was told the redevelopment of the Service remains a firm priority for Greater Southern Area Health Service, and the results of the site review will be forwarded to NSW Health to support the site's priority status.

That facility review process is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

The results of the architect's preliminary report are expected to be presented as early as 6-8 weeks time at a further Tumut public meeting.

The meeting was informed the local Health Advisory Committee

and GSAHS remain committed to seeing planning for a complete redevelopment of the local health service commenced within the next 3-5 years.

"Wagga and Bega are now in train, Tumut is next," said GSAHS's corporate planning manager, Janet Chapman.

"It is our firm goal to have a Tumut redevelopment on the capital works program of NSW Health within 3 to 5 years.

"It was identified some years ago as a priority with the (former pre-merger) Greater Murray Area Health Service, and has retained that priority with Greater Southern.

"Wagga Base planning has commenced, Bega has been recently announced, Tumut is the next cab off the rank ... the planning is progressing well."

Ms Chapman pointed out to the meeting, attended by some 40 people. It would then be up to NSW Health to find the money, not GSAHS whose job it was to identify priorities.

The meeting was told that with a Service Plan and review process in place. The next step would be a full asset audit, with information then going to NSW Health to assist it in the way it would allocate its health capital works budget.

"NSW Health is considering its ten year program, and we want Tumut to be included," she said.

Following the meeting she said this wouldn't impact on the planning process for various Multi Purpose Service" projects within the GSAHS area, subject to a different capital funding pool, where current priorities were Batlow, Berrigan, Junee, and Bombala.

Architect Ted Doufas, engaged to undertake the facility review and develop a master plan for short, medium and long term solutions for the Tumut Health Service, said over coming weeks he would be preparing a brief report aimed at generating ideas on what should happen for the future.

That would be followed by a strategic Assets Plan aimed at covering the hospital's functionality, a Service Procurement Plan involving consultation with user groups and the community, and then a project Definition Plan identifying the scope of the redevelopment, a design brief and costing.

The final stage would be design development and construction.

"In the meantime there is much consultation to be carried out and what we are looking at in the immediate future is a mud-map strategy in both a functional and physical sense," he said.

The architect, whilst not commenting on the results of an inspection on Tuesday, said he "would be very surprised" if his report did not show that the existing hospital site was the appropriate site for a new hospital, although alternative sites would be taken into account.

"It is a wonderful site on a plateau. There is ample space so a new facility there appears the likely scenario so far as the review is concerned," he said.

"Currently there are some very early buildings there developed over the years in an ad hoc manner.

"A redeveloped Tumut Health Service facility would have to meet modern standards, and would be built as a compact, functional facility that would see the local region through into the future and most importantly be designed in such a way as to best serve the staff and their patients.

"I think it would be possible to create a new one and keep the existing hospital operational."

Whilst Mr Doufas said it was far too early to put any cost estimate on such a project, Tumut was a bona fide District Hospital as distinct from a facility aimed more at residential aged care.

It would be planned as a 30 bed hospital for acute patients.

In current terms small MPS projects such as Bombala were costed at around \$9 million, whilst in larger centres such as Queanbeyan, the hospital cost around \$45 million.

During questions and comments from the floor, local real estate agent Lorraine Wysman said given the Wagga, then Tumut, project scenario she hoped that would not result in a situation of having people necessarily travelling to Wagga.

"Let's have some lateral thinking so Wagga people might come to Tumut for certain services; there are some tremendous possibilities to be innovative," she said, adding that Tumut was expecting major growth with private developers opening up new blocks and the town expanding.

It was a line also advanced by other speakers from the floor in Janelle Becker, Sue Swann and Brenda Broomhead, who spoke on potential for renal dialysis, a shire wide transport survey already undertaken, the opportunity to take advantage of new technology and "smaller cogs within larger cogs, as opposed to a hub and spoke" health service concept.

Ms Chapman said GSAHS did not use a hub and spoke concept, nor did it believe in putting all its eggs in one basket.

At the same time there were various levels of service appropriate to centres of varying size, from the smaller centres with childhood, accident and emergency and palliative facilities through to centres the size of Tumut, and larger centres such as Wagga.

"We have a tiered service, but the important thing is to keep it robust and keep as many services as possible close to you," she said.

Chairman of the Tumut Health Service Advisory committee and MC for the public meeting, Allan Tonkin, said the original hospital building had been built by the community, and progressively added to over many years.

"It has done a great job, but it is towards the end of its life.

"What we are doing is placing procedures in place so as when we get the green light it will go ahead quickly.

"We all know what we want to happen, but the first priority is maintaining the standard of the hospital's service delivery.

"You can't do much without staff and in that regard we are very fortunate."

Mr Tonkin said the major task for the public meeting was to review progress on the Health Service Plan announced six months ago.

"It should be remembered that of 35 recommendations, only seven or eight rely on capital for new equipment or facilities; the rest relate to staff and patient care," he said.

"This Service Plan is a road map on where we have to go and how long it will take to get somewhere."

He said the Health Service Advisory Committee would continue to meet bi-monthly and monitor progress with each of the recommendations.

With the completion and outcome of the facility review being a high priority a further public meeting will be called to present the architect's preliminary report in six to eight weeks time.

The Service Plan had recommended as part of the facility review that a site master plan be developed to include short and medium term solutions to shortfalls in the physical environment in the emergency department.

Whilst that report had not been completed within the March 2006 time-frame, the meeting was told work to improve security and access at both the hospital and Community Health was due for completion in July at a cost of \$250,000.

Those funds were provided following a special Minor Works Program application by GSAHS, and were addressing some of the problems raised in the public arena, the public meeting was informed.

An architect employed by GSAHS told a public meeting in Tumut this week the current hospital grounds were sufficiently large to cater for a compact, purpose-built new hospital, while the existing facility could still operate during construction. The architect will be presenting a preliminary report to another public meeting in six-eight weeks as part of a facility review process, referred to on Tuesday as 'Step One'.

June 2, 2006
Tumut & Adelong Times

Health Service Plan, but still five to ten years away.

Whilst discussions relating to a future complete redevelopment of the Tumut hospital captured most attention amongst those attending Tuesday evening's public meeting, much of the presentation from GSAHS was spent updating the community on work that has been done since the development of a Tumut Health Service Plan six months ago.

Reference was made to the expenditure of \$250,000 on works due for completion late next month on improving security and access across the hospital site, under the rural health minor works program "Keep Safe & Operating"

The meeting, held at the RSL Club, was also informed of plans to reconvene the community-based

Maternity Group which met several years ago with a view to seeking feedback from parents to identify effects of the relocation of the maternity services back into the main hospital complex from Sheahan House, and to examine options to address any adverse effects. This will also assist in the establishment of a 'standard' for a new hospital complex.

The meeting heard of improvements to the workforce with the employment of a new drug and alcohol worker, diabetes educator, physiotherapist, dietician and an occupational therapist who will work on a falls prevent program.

It was also told consultations had commenced with area clinicians and chronic complex and palliative care co-ordinators to develop appropriate models of care for cardiac, pulmonary, chronic illness and palliative care.

The Division of GPs had a new Primary Health Care nurse and discharge planning meetings had been in effect for some four months to ensure a co-ordinated and appropriate delivery of service to clients leaving hospital.

It was also informed "public" ultrasound diagnostic equipment and bulk billing had just been purchased for Wagga as distinct from "private" ultrasound services only previously available regionally from Calvary or Riverina Imaging.

The following were some of the other actions taken over the past six months, as related to Tuesday's meeting by Tumut Health Service Manager Mary Smit, and Community Health manager Ellen Hannigan:

- Moves to attract additional GPs, proceduralists, obstetricians and anaesthetists had seen three new Registrars this year, one new GP, two local GPs had indicated an interest in anaesthetics, a staff specialist anaesthetist Dr Killen from Wagga Base was providing VMO (visiting medical officer) services, and two GP/obstetricians were providing VMO services.

- A diabetes resource nurse had been appointed in May and had begun seeing clients.

- Managers were excited about the possibilities for the establishment of cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation programs following discussions with co-ordinators from,

Wagga in relation to a tailor made program for the area's residents. This would also involve community nurses, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, dietician, speech pathologist and the psychologist. Specific needs for training in chronic disease management would be addressed in planning the programs.

- Activities to promote health ageing included the appointment of an Area Falls co-ordinator, whilst allied health staff including the occupational therapist, physiotherapist and dietician would work together to address issues such as poor nutrition, inadequate physical activity and environmental hazards. The occupational therapist met community members every Wednesday morning for a slow to moderate self paced walk around the parklands.

- Work was taking place on a GSAHS web page which when completed would be linked with the Tumut Shire Council's web-site.

- A mental health first-aid course had been conducted to provide information to the community on depression and mental health issues, and it was intended to revisit the development of a mental health interagency group after certain mental health training was held in July. "Blossom" an empowerment group for women had been conducted twice, with a third group planned for Spring this year.

- A new drug and alcohol worker had commenced in April, and a successful SCUDAT project conducted last year with the Tumut Bulls would be repeated with other sporting teams.

- The Tumut Schools as Community Centres project (SACC) had seen a building completed and operational at Franklin School, and a project co-ordinator appointed. It was proposed to provide appropriate community health services at the Centre.

- An Aboriginal health worker had been visiting schools screening aboriginal children for mediaotitis, a new dietician had been talking to children and parents on "healthy eating" and child and family nurses had been immunising children.

- Training for an integrated perinatal program to screen pregnant women and assist them access appropriate services had been

completed, and roll-out was anticipated within 12 months. Child and family nurses were home-visiting every new mother and people without transport or deemed at risk followed up. Clinics had been re-established at Batlow and Adelong to ensure older children's needs were being met.

- Training for all health service staff regarding Aboriginal cultural awareness was scheduled for next month.

- A new dental health service on the hospital site would be included as part of the facility review.

- Opportunities to enhance health-related transport were currently being investigated by the GSAHS transport logistics officer, and liaison would be undertaken with the Tumut Shire Council following its recent survey.

Model for other towns

Tumut Health Service Advisory Committee chairman Allan Tonkin said the Service Plan process had put Tumut ahead of many other towns, and the information being collected and the programs being introduced would stand the district in good stead.

"Once we get the green light for a new health facility the project should be expedited because of what has been done over the past 12 months and what will continue to be done in the interim," he said.

The manager of service and corporate planning with GSAHS, Janet Chapman, said the implementation of the Service Plan was proving very beneficial and GSAHS would continue to report back to the community.

"It is a model we will be able to use in other areas," she said, adding she had been impressed by the level of understanding of health issues and planning amongst those in attendance who had provided comments or asked questions.

"We have a number of new programs underway and new services and a key component in the short and medium term is to ensure we keep surgery and maternity at the site.

"We all know in the longer term there needs to be an overall development given the existing hospital building is inadequate and we need to work through the process of the Service Plan, facility review and full asset audit as part of that goal."

The Tumut Health Service Advisory Committee will continue to meet bi-monthly and monitor progress of the recommendations within the Service Plan.

June 2, 2006

Tumut & Adelong Times

No mention in \$110 billion infrastructure plan.

Concerns have been raised that a new Tumut Hospital is listed nowhere in the NSW Government's \$110 billion, 10-year infrastructure plan released Wednesday.

The plan covers rail, road, power, water, health and education.

It contains no new announcements, but for the first time gives indications of how and when projects will be funded.

It includes details about a new police station at Wagga, the \$25m Coolac bypass and \$120m to clear the current school maintenance backlog.

Mr Iemma said the Government had attempted to match the delivery of new projects with the pressures confronting NSW in the future - an ageing population, population growth and technological advances, particularly in health.

June 2, 2006

Tumut & Adelong Times

State Infrastructure Strategy disappointing - Hodgkinson

The Nationals' Member for Burrinjuck, Katrina Hodgkinson has characterised the State Infrastructure Strategy recently released by the Carr-Iemma Government as a lost opportunity for rural NSW:

"This much touted, so called, strategy is little more than a grab bag of existing commitments dressed up in a glossy booklet," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"Important projects such as the Tumut Hospital redevelopment, the Bowring Deviation, Junction Point Road and the Tumut-Cootamundra Rail Line do not even rate a mention."

"Other projects such as the Yass and the Taralga Sewerage upgrades are mentioned, but are notated as yet to be approved."

Ms Hodgkinson said that no Police Stations in the Burrinjuck electorate are mentioned in the document and the rural centres of Adelong, Crookwell and Gunning do not even rate a mention.

"Disability accommodation in Gundagai is ignored in the document and upgrades of Gundagai Health Services are only listed under potential future new works," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"Labor's glossy document does nothing other than reinforce State Labor's 11 years of discrimination against rural NSW."

"All of the announcements for Burrinjuck are just rehashes of existing promises which should have been delivered years ago," Ms Hodgkinson said.

Batlow MPS is on the list.

June 2, 2006

Tumut & Adelong Times

Batlow MPS land negotiations break down. Negotiations stall over MPS site.

An eleventh hour breakdown in negotiations over the transfer of railway land for the site of the new Batlow Multi Purpose health Service (MPS) has led to fears it could delay the project by many months.

The land which has long been the preferred site for a greenfields new MPS as a replacement for the old Batlow hospital - the site of the old goods yard in Batlow, (opposite the Batlow Technology School) has a section of railway line running through the middle.

The Department of Health and the local MPS committee had been expecting negotiations for that land, taking in a section from Pioneer Street to Mill Road, to be completed by now in anticipation of preliminary works as early as September or October;

But Tumut Shire general manager Chris Adams said yesterday whilst it had been expected the land transfer to the health department would be handled by way of a land swap the way similar projects have been facilitated in the past, - the government entity now in con-

trol of the railway land ownership had apparently balked at the last minute.

He said although there had been previous indications that the line would need to remain open "on paper", it had been indicated that could be achieved simply by moving the "paper" line very close to the roadway.

"We now hear that the department involved is saying the line can't be moved, but that would mean the site would be unsuitable for the MPS as planned there.

"You can't have a railway line running through the middle of an MPS complex.

"In theory the line runs all the way to the Co-Op, but it will never be used for that purpose.

"What we can't fathom is how things have progressed to this late stage before the impasse has arisen.

"The Council will be making urgent representations to the government through local member Katrina Hodgkinson to have the situation resolved as a matter of the utmost urgency," said Mr Adams.

Government funding for the MPS has been approved, to the tune of around \$11 million.

The original 24-bed plan proposed four acute beds, one palliative care bed, eight high care places, ten low care places and one respite care place.

The Federal Government is funding the running costs of the 19 aged care beds once the State Government has built the facility.

Other services in the plan include two bedrooms for staff accommodation, two beds in accident and emergency, telehealth facilities and a model of local management of MPS community health staff.

The MPS site will contain the Batlow Ambulance and the plan also proposes continued investigation of options to improve the integration of community based services

The project has been delayed on a number of occasions since funding was originally announced in March 2000 by the then Minister for Health Craig Knowles.

But the government has since come to the party, with the \$11 million budget apparently including \$1 million for contingencies.

Having got this far after waiting so long there would be outrage if bureaucratic red tape as part of negotiations for land which one could never see running a train again were to further stall the project.

June 2, 2006

Tumut & Adelong Times