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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Swan Electorate: Hospitals**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 22 September 2011**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Speaker** Irons, Steve, MP

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**Mr IRONS** (Swan) (12:30): I rise today to speak about hospitals and health care in my electorate of Swan. The South Perth Hospital has once again been ranked highly in the national survey of hospital satisfaction run by Medibank. This year they have been awarded second place in Western Australia, and this comes on the back of their second place finish in 2010 and being awarded first place in the entire country in 2009. Year after year, this hospital achieves in patient satisfaction, and it is testament to the professionalism of the nurses, doctors and management.

The hospital was built just after the Second World War. At the time there was no Narrows Bridge, and those members familiar with the geography of Perth would be aware that this meant the suburb of South Perth was relatively isolated. The community felt a small hospital was needed and, following some local fundraising by a group known as the South Perth Community Centre Association, the government chipped in to allow it to be built. In 1959, a 15-bed maternity wing was added, which provided services until 2002. On a personal note, I saw my niece, Jessica Rowe, born in that hospital. Today the hospital is one of the only hospitals in the country to be completely privately funded. It is completely self-sufficient and not reliant on community financial backing to continue its operation. This is a considerable achievement in itself.

The South Perth Hospital has recently completed a \$15 million redevelopment to increase capacity. I was fortunate enough to be able to tour the hospital last year with the shadow minister for health, Peter Dutton, and I am looking forward to going back and seeing the extra capacity brought about by this development. CEO Marcia Everett describes South Perth as a boutique hospital specialising in elective surgery. Ms Everett attributes the hospital's strong showing to the high standard of clinical care and a 'holistic personal touch'. The points raised by Ms Everett are important when considering the issue of local healthcare provision. The Bentley Hospital, which is also in my electorate of Swan, is another small-scale hospital built around elective surgery. Last year I campaigned on behalf of the community for elective surgery to be maintained at Bentley Hospital, and I am pleased to say this campaign was successful. I have also been campaigning for maternity services to be retained at Bentley Hospital. This is important, given the number of young families in the area. We have managed to gain a commitment from the state health minister that he would maintain the maternity services and have them reviewed in 2014 to see what the community need is.

I have campaigned for these services because of the importance of small-scale local hospitals to communities. It is true that we need the larger hospitals such as Sir Charles Gairdner or Royal Perth. It was the WA Liberal government which saved the Royal Perth Hospital, which the state Labor government had consigned to be closed prior to the last state election. But local people, especially seniors, did not want to have to travel so far to the new hospital being built in the southern suburbs, so we needed to keep the Royal Perth Hospital open and that is what the WA Liberal government has done.

Madam Deputy Speaker D'Ath, you may have been listening to my speech the other night, but I do not think you were in the chamber at the time. I spoke about the situation of Australians living with disease, specifically adhesive arachnoiditis, and called for an inquiry into their circumstances. I spoke about how the disease slowly shuts down the body. A trip to the hospital can become an ordeal in its own right for those people. Local hospitals are of value to the community, in particular people with those types of diseases.

It is important to have strong local hospitals and it is also important to have strong administrative districts for hospitals and health centres that meet the needs of the local community. I recently worked together with the Canning Division of General Practice to make sure that the proposed Medicare Locals boundaries are suitable for the Swan community. The initial boundaries released by the government were unacceptable to the Canning Division of General Practice, as they split their current area into two. Among other problems, the proposed area would have excluded Curtin University, which the division had put a significant amount of effort into establishing relationships with. I made representations on behalf of the Canning division for amendments to these boundaries

and also spoke to the member for Brand, who also supported the move. I am pleased to say that we were successful and achieved what we believe was an important outcome for local health.

I would like to conclude by saying that it is important that we retain a mixture of providers of health care, including maintaining a healthy private sector. The Commonwealth government has long provided a private healthcare rebate for those Australians that decide to take out private health care. This has been based on research, like that of Econtech, Harper Associates and Hagan, stating that every dollar of funding provided for the private health insurance rebate saves \$2 of costs that are then paid by private health insurers.

In early September, here in the parliament, I was presented with a petition by HBF CEO Rob Bransby from 3,372 constituents in my electorate of Swan.

In conclusion, I once again congratulate South Perth Hospital on their award. *(Time expired)*