



Government  
of South Australia

Hon Chris Picton MP  
Minister for Health  
and Wellbeing

MHW-H22-6976

Mr Tony Pasin MP  
Federal Member for Barker  
Email: Tony.Pasin.mp@aph.gov.au

*Tony,*

Dear Mr Pasin

Thank you for your letter dated 30 September 2022, regarding access to cancer treatment services in Mount Gambier.

I requested information from the Limestone Coast Local Health Network (LCLHN) and received the following advice:

*LCLHN acknowledges that regional and remote communities are disadvantaged due to the need to travel to access radiation therapy treatment services.*

*The proposal to establish a radiation therapy service in the Mount Gambier and Districts Health Service (MGDHS) has been investigated thoroughly by LCLHN, however, it has been found to be unsustainable. The following challenges have been identified in establishing a radiation therapy centre in Mount Gambier:*

- *Recruitment and retention of highly specialised staff in a regional area*
- *Maintenance of equipment, particularly access to timely breakdown repair in a regional location*
- *The ability to manage patients who become ill from radiation therapy and the ability of a regional LHN to rapidly transfer patients to a tertiary hospital*
- *Governance and clinical oversight requirements.*

*In lieu of a radiation therapy service, LCLHN has received confirmation of Commonwealth funding to expand the current chemotherapy unit at the MGDHS into a cancer centre with a focus on wellness and holistic care including Allied Health support.*

*LCLHN can also advise that a second Oncologist has been recruited to the chemotherapy unit at the MGDHS, to further increase the capacity of the service.*

South Australians were recently encouraged to share their experiences with cancer to help shape a new SA Cancer Plan being developed by the Malinauskas Labor Government. Public consultation on the new plan – an election commitment – concluded in November 2022 to help improve cancer care and streamline health services across the state.

The last SA Cancer Plan expired in 2015, with no forward plan on how to address this critical area of health and a long-term outlook for cancer services ignored by the Liberals for four years. A non-existent 'SA Cancer Plan 2018-2022' was scheduled for release in 2018 under the former Government but was long overdue – due to expire before it was ever released.

Minister for Health and Wellbeing

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Labor is addressing this issue by working with patients, families, clinicians and the wider community to expand services and ensure they meet future demands. The new five-year plan will focus on all aspects of cancer care including prevention, screening, diagnosis, early detection, treatment, survivorship and palliative care in metropolitan and regional areas.

A draft plan – based on this community feedback – will be released next year for further consultation before a final plan is implemented by the end of 2023. The new SA Cancer Plan will then determine future models of cancer care and resource allocation to ensure more timely and accessible services for patients.

Labor is committed to providing better care to cancer patients, including a \$28 million investment to open a new Modbury Hospital Cancer Centre by 2025.

It is clear there is a need for significant investment to improve our health system. This is why the Malinauskas Labor Government is investing more than \$2.4 billion to fix the ramping crisis and significantly expand our health system with an additional 554 hospital and community beds.

For the Limestone Coast this investment will deliver:

- An additional 24 paramedics and ambulance officers for the Limestone Coast region, including:
  - A new 24/7 paramedic crew and a new 12-hour regional transfer crew based at Mount Gambier
  - A new 12-hour regional transfer crew based at Keith, reducing demand on resources diverting from the region
- \$24 million for upgrading the Mount Gambier and Districts Health Service, including \$8 million for the Emergency Department, \$11.4 million for six new mental health beds and \$4.6 million for two drug and alcohol detox beds
- \$8 million as the start of a major redevelopment of the Naracoorte Health Service
- \$9.75 million for the Keith and District Hospital, providing stability to the facility, staff and community.

All these measures will combine to establish a better health system that both current and future generations can benefit from however, implementing them and making long lasting change will take time. It will take time for upgrades to be delivered and for the nurses, doctors and ambos to be recruited and trained however delivering on these commitments is a priority for the Malinauskas Labor Government.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me about this matter.

Yours sincerely



Chris Picton MP  
**Minister for Health and Wellbeing**

30/11/2023