

### COUNTRY HEALTH

Mr BROCK (Frome) (11:56): I totally agree with all the previous speakers. I think the health subject would be the greatest challenge facing whoever is in government, whether it is state or federal government. We are becoming an older population. We are asking people to be more concerned about their health and to have more examinations to try to prevent their having to go to hospital, but as our population grows older, we require more attention, more hospitalisation and more services.

I take on board all the previous speakers. The member for Stuart is correct. I am concerned about the inequity in regional South Australia compared to the metropolitan area of South Australia. We have, in my area, a good hospital, a good regional health service at Port Pirie. We have a good service at Clare. We have excellent district hospitals at Port Broughton and Crystal Brook. However, my concern is that, over the many years, services have been allowed to continue without any maintenance or improvements going forward. Up until about a month ago, I had been fighting very hard for renal dialysis machines in the Port Pirie Regional Health Service. I have mentioned in this house previously that in my role as the mayor of the Port Pirie Regional Council, some 15 years ago, the community and I fought very hard to get these renal dialysis units in Port Pirie. We were not successful.

I congratulate the government and the minister with whom I have had personal dealings over the past six or eight months. He is now establishing the facilities for four renal units in Port Pirie. Prior to that, these patients had to travel to Port Augusta on three or four days a week, and from Port Broughton they had to travel to Clare. As the member for Stuart has indicated—and I think the member for Finniss also indicated—there is a cost factor.

Unfortunately, this is a separate issue—and I will be taking this up with the minister at a later date—and the PATS payment does not assist disadvantaged people in regional South Australia. People travelling from Port Broughton to Clare do not get any reimbursement because it is below the threshold. It does not meet the minimum requirement for these people to travel on three or four days a week, stay there with a carer to look after them and have the dialysis treatment because once they have had the dialysis treatment they cannot and should not drive their car home. That is an issue.

No matter who is in government it has been going on for many years. We put a service into a location. The frequency may be every month for that service to visit those locations. As it continues we look at cost savings. The member for Light rightly said that it needs to be sustainable but, at the same time, we need to ensure that services are there on a regular basis, not start them out one monthly or two monthly and then push them out to three, four or five month intervals.

That does not help the patients requiring the service because those patients will say, 'I cannot afford to travel 100 kilometres four days a week so, therefore, I will defer it and only go once.' They may not even go for treatment. In the interim period the injury or disease may be getting worse.

The member for Fisher has talked about his brother-in-law. I am talking now about the female side of the cancer. The mammogram machine in Port Pirie Regional Health Service has been out of action for 12 months. I have had many complaints in the past two weeks from medical practitioners in the region who say that replacing the machine is not the issue. Rather, the replacement of the service provider is becoming a nightmare. It has now been going on for 12 months. Again, I will be taking up this issue with the minister directly. I do not expect to win this, but I understand that the replacement of a service provider through the bureaucratic system is becoming a nightmare and longwinded.

Currently, we continue to promote examinations by women to ensure they do not get breast cancer, they do not aggravate it, they get it before it gets too far down the line. In that respect I can talk from experience. My late mother-in-law a long time ago did not have the regular examination because of the non-availability of a machine. Instead of having it every

month, she deferred it for three or four months. Unfortunately, in her case the disease, the complaint, went too far and it took her life after an agonising six months not only in hospital but also at home.

I am very passionate about examinations. Even my partner has to have regular mammogram examinations. She is very aware of that because breast cancer is in her family. We all have these issues. We need to ensure that equity in regional South Australia is the same as in the metropolitan area.

I agree that the Royal Adelaide Hospital is a hot topic between the two parties, between the government and the opposition. However, as a parliament we need to ensure we work together for health into the future. We should be able to reach a compromise and agree where these facilities should be. We are here to represent the people of regional South Australia and the metropolitan area of Adelaide, and we need to ensure those people do not suffer because of issues on which we disagree in this house.

The member for Fisher mentioned his brother-in-law. I would be interested to know whether his brother-in-law reads *Hansard* and finds that the member for Fisher has indicated he can afford to come to Adelaide. There is a cost factor. It has a traumatic effect on your health to come down for a start. You are away from your family. There are financial implications on your family. At the moment my chief of staff is at the Ashford Hospital for an operation. She is very stressed because she is missing her family. If those services could go into regional South Australia then we would have a far better home life, and so on.

In closing, I just want to reassure members that I am really passionate about health across the whole of South Australia. I am very passionate about regional South Australia. I just want to see the current services and equipment that is in regional hospitals maintained, not decreased and not reduced. Also, I want to see an increase in the services and frequency of specialist services to ensure that regional South Australia feels part of the rest of the population of this great state.