



LCM not listening to community, Greens say

By Ewa Kretowicz

The ACT Greens have accused the Little Company of Mary of being “closed minded” in discussions about the sale of Clare Holland House.

Securing the party’s support will be crucial for the Government if the sale of the hospice is to proceed.

Greens health spokeswoman Amanda Bresnan had a meeting with Little Company of Mary chairman Tom Brennan yesterday.

The pair attended a heated public forum about the ACT Government’s sale of Clare Holland House as part of a deal to buy back Calvary Hospital from the Catholic health provider on Thursday.

“The LCM, they have a bit of an attitude that they know the interests of the ACT better than the elected representatives,” Ms Bresnan said.

“I don’t know if that’s helpful and I don’t necessarily see that he [Mr Brennan] is listening to the community and what we are saying and that does concern me.”

The Greens support the purchase of Calvary hospital from Little Company of Mary for \$77 million, but have raised concerns about the sale of Clare Holland House.

Ms Bresnan refused to say whether the Greens would scuttle the deal when it reaches the Legislative Assembly.

“We would like to see it [Clare Holland House] stay in Government hands; we would like LCM to be considering what comes out of the consultation process,” she said.

“We think it’s really important to have a secular facility in the ACT, and it’s a best-practice facility and that’s what the public consultation is showing.”

An online *Canberra Times* poll asked readers if the ACT Government should sell Clare Holland House to the Little Company of Mary. Of the 411 respondents 70 per

cent said “no”, with only 30 per cent replying “yes”.

Health Minister Katy Gallagher was unavailable for interview yesterday, but has previously said the Government’s purchase of Calvary was conditional on the sale of Clare Holland House.

Ms Bresnan said there was confusion over which party had sought to put Clare Holland House on the table during negotiations.

At Thursday’s meeting, Mr Brennan said the Government offered the palliative care facility as part of the deal.

He also reaffirmed the organisation’s position that it would not sell the hospital unless it could buy the hospice. He said the hospice would be upgraded with part of the proceeds of the sale.

Mr Brennan was not available for interview yesterday.

Ms Gallagher’s office issued this statement: “The Minister has consistently stated publicly that she broached the subject of the ACT resuming ownership of Calvary Hospital with [LCM] and that the future of Clare Holland House was part of those discussions from the beginning.

“In pursuing ownership of Calvary, the Government recognised the need to ensure [LCM] maintained a role in public healthcare in Canberra via its association with the hospice. In withdrawing from public hospital care, [LCM] has expressed a desire to strengthen its commitment to public palliative care and secure its future.”

The Opposition will vote against the deal when it comes before the Legislative Assembly and the Government will need the Greens’ support to pass the appropriation Bill to pay for the transaction. If the deal goes through, Clare Holland House will be sold to the Little Company of Mary for \$9 million.