



Stanhope pressures Greens on Calvary Hospital plan

By Victor Violante
 Chief Assembly Reporter

Chief Minister Jon Stanhope has turned up the heat on the Greens to support the ACT Government's bid to buy Calvary Hospital and sell Clare Holland House, launching an unprecedented attack on Greens leader Meredith Hunter.

Seizing on ACT Health Minister Katy Gallagher's absence, the acting Health Minister demanded Ms Hunter explain to the Ginninderra electorate why her party was considering not supporting the purchase of Calvary Hospital from the Little Company of Mary Health Care for \$77 million.

Mr Stanhope said the non-government Ginninderra members – Ms Hunter and Opposition MLAs Alistair Coe and Vicki Dunne – needed to explain their parties' positions to the north Canberra electorate.

The Little Company of Mary has

previously said it would build a new 75-bed private hospital in Bruce with the proceeds of the sale, and the Government has said it would make a \$200 million capital investment to improve Calvary Hospital if the deal goes through. Mr Stanhope said Ms Hunter was jeopardising both outcomes.

"Meredith Hunter hasn't explained why she is thinking of not allowing a \$200 million rebuild of Calvary, or why she is thinking of not allowing a brand new, 75-bed hospital to be built, and neither Vicki Dunne or Alistair Coe are on the horizon," Mr Stanhope said.

Ms Hunter dismissed Mr Stanhope's comments, accusing him of trying to bully the Greens.

"We've been quite clear that we support the purchase of Calvary Hospital, and that we have raised concerns about the sale of the hospice," Ms Hunter said.

Mr Stanhope's attack is at odds with the diplomatic approach Ms Gallagher has taken with the Greens in relation to the hospital deal in recent months, prompting speculation from Opposition Leader Zed Seselja that Mr Stanhope is stepping up political pressure on the Greens in anticipation of his retirement from politics later this year, thereby allowing his successor, Ms Gallagher, to continue her amicable relationship with Ms Hunter.

ACT Greens health spokeswoman Amanda Bresnan has repeatedly said the Greens supported the purchase of the public hospital but not if it was dependent on the sale of the hospice, while Opposition health spokesman Jeremy Hanson has also explained why the Liberals did not support the hospital purchase or the hospice sale.