



Greater transparency needed over Calvary sale

Jack Waterford's feature article ("The Knights come to Calvary", *Forum*, October 3, p8) and Monday's editorial ("Calvary takeover the public's loss", October 5, p8) have filled in some of the background to the proposed "sale" of Calvary Public Hospital to the ACT Government.

Waterford deals with some of the personality issues, especially "personalities" not previously cited as being involved. The editorial is more about the political issues involved.

Interestingly, neither article mentions the role, if any, being played by the ACT Liberals. Perhaps they are just keeping their heads down. However, some issues are still not clear.

First, if the Calvary site was gifted by the Commonwealth, and the ACT and Commonwealth have entirely funded recurrent services at Calvary Public Hospital, and all building/capital costs have been met from grants from the ACT and federal governments, why is the ACT Government now proposing to pay millions to the LCM for Calvary Public Hospital?

Is it for intangibles such as "brand" or goodwill? If not intangibles, what exactly is the ACT taxpayer is going to get for the millions to be paid out?

Is it the full list of services shown under the heading Calvary Public Hospital on the LCM website or does it include a mix of those services and the some of those included under the heading Calvary Private Hospital on the same website?

Does the proposed agreement deal

with the transfer of land?

I am loathe to suggest that the issue needs a Legislative Assembly inquiry. However, unless all parties start to be a bit more open about what is going on, then that may be necessary.

A worse-case scenario would be for the deal to be done, only later to be shown to be less-than-transparent by a report by the Auditor General.

E.L. Fisher, Kambah

E.L.Fisher (Letters, October 6) does not, sadly, make gripping reading with *The Da Vinci Code*-type collection of errors.

Even the local press has actually printed some government acknowledgments that the funding promised (in some curious fashion) for the running of Calvary Public Hospital has been consistently and deliberately underpaid (if not unpaid in some years) over a considerable period.

Labor and Liberal federal and ACT governments have all taken this disgraceful action. Taxpayers have never been provided with the figure of the finance withheld.

The taxpayers (read voters), especially those already in poor health, might also see this appalling, unethical behaviour as virtual theft of funds promised for the provision of public health hospital care in the ACT.

I suspect that if the total of promised, undelivered funding is ever provided, it will be much greater than the \$77 million mentioned in negotiations for the sale of Calvary Hospital.

The ACT Government is presently

attempting to bullock this thoroughly suspect agreement through the local community after clandestine negotiations commenced months before the last election!

E.A. Hall, Griffith

I haven't been following the ins and outs of the ACT Government's takeover of Calvary; but if I read the *Canberra Times* editorial ("Calvary takeover the public's loss", October 5, p8) accurately, it seems an amazing state of affairs has arisen – for two reasons.

First, apparently the Government is taking the hospital over because, under the Government's accounting system, monies provided to the Little Company of Mary for capital expenditure at the hospital can't be shown in government accounts as capital expenditure, separate from recurring expenditure – and this affects the Budget deficit.

Why on earth should a defect in the Government's accounting system dictate expenditure of \$77 million to acquire an asset? Why not simply fix the defect in the accounting system?

Second, for some reason that's not clear, hospital assets that the Government has paid for became the property of the Little Company of Mary – and the Government has to pay for them again, \$77 million, to now transfer ownership!

For the Government to pay again for assets it's already paid for seems quite illogical, and inequitable for taxpayers.

The situation seems so unreal that perhaps I'm missing something. Am I?

R.S. Gilbert. Braddon