



## What's the real reason behind the Calvary proposal?

I've been reluctant to enter the debate about the ACT Government's proposed purchase of the Calvary Hospital but feel that the real reason behind it may not have been publicly revealed.

The initial Commonwealth Government decision to proceed with the Calvary Hospital project hung fire under several Prime Ministers till John McEwen was acting PM and approved the project (I think on a Sunday morning).

Sister de Montfort, the Principal of the Little Company of Mary and I, as chairman of the ACT Health Commission, then turned the first sod, and ever since the hospital opened it has provided, under LCM management and predominantly government funding, efficient second tier public hospital services, not only for the ACT but also for surrounding parts of New South Wales.

So why change an arrangement that has been working well?

Like all hospitals Calvary will continue to need capital funding to maintain and develop its services and we're being told the ACT Government will find this difficult to provide unless it can take over direct ownership and management responsibility for the hospital.

If this is really so I have yet to see a convincing explanation and therefore suspect there may be some other as yet unrevealed ulterior motive.

Governments in Australia have not proved hyper-efficient in directly running hospitals.

So I'm aghast both that the ACT Government wants to spend \$70

million of our ACT residents' money on buying a hospital which was almost totally built and maintained with previous government funding and also that the Little Company of Mary would now contemplate receiving such funds to which it has no moral right nor, as well summarised yesterday by Peter O'Keeffe ("Need for total public transparency on Calvary sale", October 13, p9) apparently any legal entitlement.

**Ron Wells, MD, Mawson**

Tom Brennan (Letters, October 13) misunderstands that Federal Cabinet agreed to negotiations with the Catholic Archdiocese and not the LCM.

But many questions need to be answered.

Why has the LCM Board accepted reduced funding for Calvary and why is the Government proposing to pay for the lease when both matters are evidently contrary to the lease arrangements?

Why did Stanhope drop negotiations with the LCM in 2005 and resume his campaign in 2007-08? Was it because he waited for appropriate LCM Board changes?

Why has the Board failed to begin a public campaign to ensure appropriate funding levels were resumed?

Why have north-side residents not been given an adequate standard of hospital services.

Why was this matter kept quite over the last ACT election?

Which other government funded services will be targeted for take over next?

**Paul Monagle, Forrest**

It is good to see the public putting its views on the proposal that the ACT Government buy Calvary Hospital.

In the interests of transparency, we have had posted on our website for some months a large range of materials to assist people understand the history and the issues.

Peter O'Keeffe's analysis of some of that material focuses on the terms of several agreements between the Little Company of Mary and government ("Need for total public transparency on Calvary sale", October 13, p9).

The terms he looks at are those which contemplated LCMHC deciding to "discontinue the conduct of the [public] hospital" But let's be perfectly clear - LCMHC has at no time "decided to discontinue the conduct of the [public] hospital."

In fact, all of the current discussions about the hospital concern how it can best be kept operating as a public hospital.

On August 20, 2008 the Minister proposed that the government buy the hospital from us. Whether or not the government's proposal proceeds the public hospital will continue - with either the government or LCMHC as the operator.

Mr O'Keeffe's analysis of the agreements, focusing on a scenario where we decide to "discontinue" the conduct of Calvary Public Hospital, simply does not apply to the present proposal.

**Tom Brennan, Chair, Little Company of Mary Health Care.**