



Hospital puzzle

What with emissions trading schemes, boat people, the headache and heartache of Afghanistan, and the impenetrable obfuscations of our Prime Nerd, there is more than enough around at present to baffle and bewilder.

And, to top it off, we have the ACT Government and its schemes for Calvary Hospital.

I have yet to see one even half-plausible explanation as to why we should pay the Little Company of Mary for what we have already paid.

Nor have I seen any explanation as to why the Government thinks it's OK for ownership of the only hospice in the ACT to pass to a religious organisation.

Yes, I know the Little Company is doing a fine job in running it. But shouldn't our society as a whole be accepting a responsibility for providing such a last staging post, in the same way that it provides hospitals and schools available to all?

Jon or Katy, please, please explain.

G. Jones. Torrens
seen an act of political suicide to match the ACT Government's offer to pay \$77 million for a hospital it's already paid for – particularly when there's a better way to achieve legal ownership.

The alternative is to amend the

agreement under which the Little Company of Mary receives annual grants, to separate the element that is for operation of the hospital from the element that is for capital works, and make the capital grant expenditure by LCM on behalf of the Government, with ownership of the assets involved legally resting with the ACT Government.

This would give the Government part-ownership of the hospital immediately, with the proportion rapidly increasing as a further \$200 million is spent over the next few years – and, under the terms of the documentation covering the hospital, full ownership when the lease expires or is surrendered.

Incidentally, that documentation clearly embraces the principle that LCM shouldn't gain from assets the Government has already paid for.

And LCM subscribed to that; so that, morally, it shouldn't be demanding or accepting \$77 million for the hospital now.

It should be prepared to "sell" it for the current book value of assets *if* paid for.

Perhaps that should be put to LCM first, and the above alternative invoked only if LCM will not agree.

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