



A hidden agenda

This is what I would have said if I had managed to get to the consultation held on Friday at Calvary Hospital.

The clear winner is Little Company of Mary (LCM). They get the prime hospice site, money for a new private hospital and avoid any responsibility to contribute to the ongoing financial needs of Calvary.

What does the taxpayer gain? We lose the hospice, pay for assets clearly in need of upgrade that we have already paid for and we are still liable for all the modernisation and upgrade costs.

It is hard to see how this is a benefit. It is unclear why the hospice has to enter into the issue at all. It should be decoupled from the Calvary issue, and the proceeds from its proposed sale are so small in the scheme of things it should not be relevant to the main issue.

As for the hospital, can the minister explain why two other options are not better? First, a joint venture with LCM, whereby any future government capital grants take the form of a proportionate share of ownership in the hospital. The territory still then continues to own its

contribution, and can put the \$77 million towards upgrade as well as what it otherwise would have spent and the existing experienced operators can remain in place.

This also means there is more money available for public hospital facilities as we will not have to find the \$77 million.

Alternatively, why not put the \$77 million and proposed upgrade costs towards a new public hospital and let LCM continue to operate Calvary. If it decides not to continue to operate it because the taxpayer is no longer prepared to underwrite the capital costs needed for its operation, so be it. That will not be the end of the world as we will have a brand new public hospital owned by the public.

The implicit "threat" of Brennan (Letters, October 15) of dire consequences if Calvary closes is no substitute for informed public debate, which up until now has been lacking.

The only Government justification, namely an accounting need, obviously hides some other agenda.

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