

Tuesday 19 February 2008

## **\$88.4M BOOST FOR BALLARAT HEALTH SERVICES UNDER VIC COALITION**

Ballarat Hospital would have 60 more beds and the capacity to treat an extra 9,000 patients per year under an \$88.4 million Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition plan.

Funding would be provided for an additional 20 doctors and 80 nurses at Ballarat Base Hospital and another ten GPs would be recruited from interstate to fill Ballarat-area vacancies under the Victorian Coalition plan.

Shadow Cabinet, which met in Ballarat today, also endorsed the Coalition's plan to recruit additional specialists to help train rural medical graduates and meet local medical needs. The Victorian Coalition would also pressure the Rudd Labor Government for more GP training places in the Ballarat region.

This plan will provide a significant boost to help Ballarat meet current and future demand for its health services, created by a growing population and a lack of government support.

Under the Victorian Coalition's plan, Ballarat Hospital would be expanded by 60 beds – including funding for staffing and operating costs – which means the hospital could treat almost 40,000 patients per year, increasing treatment capacity by one-third.

Specialists and GPs would be offered recruitment benefits worth up to \$50,000, more generous than other states including South Australia which only offers packages of up to \$34,000.

The last time additional bed capacity was funded in Ballarat was under the previous Liberal Government, and if elected in 2010 we intend to give Ballarat the health funding it deserves.

Waiting times for elective surgery in Ballarat are unacceptable – one patient has been waiting almost three and half years for orthopaedic surgery and another patient has waited since June 2004 for shoulder surgery.

There are now 1138 patients on the elective surgery waiting list at Ballarat – up from 812 patients two and half years ago.

# Policy

Funding pressure on Ballarat Hospital has meant that it treated 109 patients per bed per year in 2002 and now treats 140 patients per bed per year.

Severe GP shortages, surgery waiting lists, increased waiting times, lack of hospital-based specialists and no infrastructure money for specialist training places in hospitals have become an unwelcome yet familiar refrain for Ballarat residents.

John Brumby has presided over a stunning decline in Ballarat-area health services. If elected in November 2010, the Victorian Coalition will act to reverse this decline and ensure that Ballarat is provided with the capacity to meet current and future demands for a growing region.

The Victorian Coalition believes that Ballarat deserves better. Our boost to Ballarat healthcare will end Labor's neglect of Ballarat by delivering better hospital and health services.