



RURAL DOCTORS ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND

'Supporting Rural Doctors and Rural Communities'

MEDIA RELEASE

Hospital boards best for communities

Queensland's country doctors have joined the Australian Medical Association in supporting Federal Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's plan to hand control of some hospitals back to the communities they serve, RDAQ President Sheilagh Cronin said today.

"We've all seen the figures saying Queensland's Hospital Boards were \$300 million in debt when abolished by the Goss government," she said, "But we also know that the boards were terribly underfunded and they valued caring for their communities above meeting their inadequate budgets. They put their money where it was needed."

"Goss' replacements were even worse. After local boards we had regionalisation: now abolished. Zones: abolished. And Districts, merged into mega-Districts and uber-mega-Districts that have lost touch with small hospitals and small communities.

"\$300 million looks good against the \$10 billion repair bill for what came next: that was the Beattie and Robertson '5-Year Health Action Plan' to fix Goss's mess," Dr Cronin said.

"Replacing the hospital boards has cost Queenslanders thirty times the debt that the boards ran up," Dr Cronin calculates.

"Losing local control put meeting the budget bottom-line ahead of caring for communities," Dr Cronin said, citing significant failures in the management systems since boards were abolished.

"Mr Lucas recalls Townsville's Ward 10B, but that was 2 decades ago," she said.

"What about the Caboolture Emergency Department that was forced to close even while the Anna Bligh and the Minister were being told it was all fine? What about the closed rural maternity services, that left a mother to birth in the Miles Hospital carpark? What about Roma Hospital that recently lost most of its senior medical staff in the space of a month? What about the Torres Strait security problems, or Beaudesert Hospital that is running at half capacity? And above all, what about Bundaberg?"

"If Lucas and Bligh think the system they've got now is in touch with the needs of small communities then they need to ask for a fresh briefing," Dr Cronin said.

"Queensland can't afford another \$10 billion rescue bill. Bring back local responsibility for local health care needs."

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