

Media release

Thursday, 6 March 2014

SA Liberals must release health policy today

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) has today ramped up its calls for the South Australian Liberal Party to release details of its health policies ahead of the upcoming state election.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition, Steven Marshall MP, referred to the “*huge range*” of policies available on the South Australian Liberal party website. Mr Marshall was also reported as saying “*we're out there talking about health on pretty much a daily basis.*”

Adj Assoc Professor Elizabeth Dabars, CEO ANMF (SA Branch), said the SA Liberal website only contained detailed policies on mental health and suicide prevention, the Modbury Hospital Paediatric ward and funding for a Parkinson’s nurse.

A Liberal government has also committed to re-open obstetric services at the Millicent Hospital, guaranteed funding at the McLaren Vale Hospital and matched the Labor Party's commitment to expand the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Flinders Medical Centre, which is not mentioned on their website.

“If Mr Marshall believes that this information alone constitutes a “huge range” of policies, then we will be dealing with a health system on life support if the Liberal party is elected,” Ms Dabars said.

“With such limited information on the Liberal plan for our health system, the South Australian community has no way of making an informed choice at the ballot box in just over a week,” Ms Dabars said.

Ms Dabars said the ANMF (SA Branch) had no interest in playing politics, but made no apologies for pursuing strong policy commitments from all parties and independents.

“The reality is that almost the entire health system - hospitals, primary health care, community care, drug and alcohol services, services to veterans and services to country areas – has gone without any announced policy detail from the Opposition,” Ms Dabars said.

“Given that healthcare, particularly hospital services, are a core responsibility of any state government, it is critical that the Opposition makes clear its comprehensive policy platform on health and its plans for our public health services.”

“If the Opposition does not have a plan for health care it cannot have an economic plan either given that health swallows nearly \$5 billion – or one-third – of all state budget expenditure.”



Some of what we do NOT know 9 days out from the state election:

- What is the Opposition's policy in relation to the SA Health Care Plan released and reviewed by the current Government?
- Will all services currently provided in all hospital sites be maintained under a Liberal Government?
- What are the Opposition's plans for governance and leadership of health services in SA?
- What commitment will the Opposition give to continuing growth in funding to the health care system given increasing demand for services as the population both grows and ages?
- What specific commitments will the Opposition provide the staff of the SA Health system in relation to future workforce requirements, including the employment of graduate nurses and midwives in the system?
- Is the Opposition committed to continuing implementation of the 'Stepping Up' reforms of the mental health system including the recommendations from the Ernst Young review of that strategy in 2013?