This briefing paper is jointly prepared by the Chair of the Board of Management of Healthy House a non government agency providing allied health services in the Break O’ Day region and the General Manager of Medea Park Residential Aged Care Service in St Helens also the Vice Chair of the Board of Management of Healthy House.

Some statistics: Residential population Break O’ Day 6069
- Median age 46
- 20% aged 65 years and over
- 32.6% low income or welfare dependant
- 43% concession card holders
- Median income $296 per week – placing average earners below Henderson poverty line

Most welfare and health provision agencies in Break O’ Day and surrounds are dealing with frail and vulnerable people who either cannot travel or find travelling for medical care difficult, challenging or even impossible.

Our original discussions at a 2013 forum in St Helens flowed around a “one stop shop” concept where instead of simply replicating the existing facility with another similar hospital on a different site [which would cost a great deal but not adequately meet the growing needs of this rural and regional community] we could have a “centre of excellence” under one roof which would include some or all of the following:

1. Hospital emergency department
2. Surgical facilities for minor surgical needs [obviating the need for all surgery to be referred to either LGH or Hobart]
3. General hospital wards
4. Specialist treatment facilities
5. Consulting rooms for visiting specialists
6. Physiotherapy rooms
7. Occupational Therapy rooms
8. Speech Pathology rooms
9. Mental health assessment and co-related services
10. Rehabilitation/Acute Care delivered at and for Rural/Country Hospitals
This unique facility could also co-locate other allied health services in the region.

Examples include:

- Healthy House
- St Helens Medical Centre
- Emergency Services

There needs to be a systemic approach to this issue which includes consultative/collaborative approaches involving allied health services including aged care and other relevant non-government agencies delivering vital social services to vulnerable people in the broader extended community.

It is our view that a short sighted approach taken now will have costly long term implications.

It is a matter of record already that younger people are leaving Tasmania seeking educational and career opportunities and not returning to bring their expertise and skills to contribute to the potential wealth and future of the state.

More mature people are leaving as a result of the lack of adequate health and medical facilities. At this rate we will have nothing left to offer anyone as an incentive to either stay or return.

The hospital complex issue is an ideal matter on which to make a stand and create a unique facility which will potentially:

1. Provide quality medical services and support for an entire rural and remote area in one facility.
2. Make access to those services easy for most if not all consumers.
3. Make the facility an attractive complex for medical practitioners to use.
4. Make the facility an attractive complex for visiting specialists to use.
5. Provide employment/contracts for practitioners, specialists and para-professionals.
6. Make staying in the area a more attractive proposition.
7. Make returning to the area a more attractive proposition [especially for those with family and other connections].
Summary:

This is by no means a comprehensive document. We have simply tried here to outline a few salient points for your early consumption. The central facts are that before final decisions are taken we would urge that further consultation takes place with the significant people involved in the community, i.e. the service deliverers, those who work directly with the aged, the frail, the people with disabilities, the very young, those with ongoing illnesses, those dependent on daily support, the vulnerable, the lonely, the ones without transport, those who live alone, those who cannot get to the doctor or hospital unaided.

It is they who understand the needs, not the bureaucrats or the policy writers.

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