

Shire of Manjimup

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EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE – REVIEW OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the Education and Health Standing Committee in regard to the review of WA's current and future hospital and community health care services.

The Shire of Manjimup is located approximately 125km from Bunbury to its north and 112km from Albany from the south east border of the 7000sqkm shire which is 85% state forest or national park. The shire has 4 towns and 6 smaller settlements and has a shire population of 9500.

The Shire' population is ageing at a rate slightly higher than the state average and it has a high disadvantage SEIFA score with some areas rating as very high. The 2006 census statistics showed that all Shires across the southwest showed decreased disadvantage with SEIFA scores increasing except for Boyup Brook, Manjimup and Collie. In Boyup Brook and Collie this increase was marginal but in Manjimup there was a marked increase in disadvantage within the community. (SW Population Health Unit June 2008)

Anecdotally and statistically, since 2000, there has been a marked difference in the socio economic mix of the Shire, this is largely as a result of the timber and dairy industry restructures which resulted in long term residents relocating for work resulting in an increase in cheap housing (private and Department of Housing) which is now filled to capacity.

It is well understood that economic and social inequalities go hand in hand; their combined impact results in limited opportunities and life chances for many who are affected by them. (AIHW 2008. Australia's Health 2008. cat.No.AUS99.Canberra:AIHW). Magnifying this impact in the Shire of Manjimup is the reduction in specialist health services visiting or based in the area and the need for residents to travel to the closest regional centres being Albany or Bunbury for specialist services; coupled with limited public transport or alternative transport options.

I submit the following for consideration by the Standing Committee:

Identify outstanding needs and gaps in children and adult community health services:

- **Transport**
Specialist services are increasingly being located within major regional centres; at the same time however there has been limited recognition or resources applied to resolving the added burden of transport and accessibility for the ageing and low income populations who increasingly need to access these services.

Limited public transport, inflexibility of bus schedules and routes, and restrictions on HACC funded services limit the ability to resolve the issue at the local level.

A local transport forum, supported by the Department of Transport, could potentially find a solution to some of the transport issues.

- **PATS**
Community feedback in regard to the PATS scheme is that it is inconsistent, confusing and inadequate in terms of fuel and accommodation costs for both the client and carer.
- **St Johns Ambulance – Volunteer Service**
There are 4 Volunteer Ambulance Services within the Shire of Manjimup – all are struggling to be sustainable in terms of available volunteers.

The Manjimup and Pemberton sub centres are under increasing demand to provide patient transports to Bunbury which is a 4 hour minimum return trip. This is a high expectation on a limited number of volunteers and their employees or businesses. In addition volunteers are Ambulance Officers and not Paramedics.

In some circumstances the loss of one or two volunteers from a sub centre could result in the centre closing.

- **Respite Care**
There is a growing unmet need for respite care in the Manjimup region. There are adequate human services to provide respite to families and carers however there is no accommodation to offer respite away from the family home. There is a growing need for a respite care house/centre.

The Shire is currently working to encourage the state to allocate land for Respite Care, supported accommodation and self funded seniors housing.

- **0-8 Child Health and Education Support services**
The increasing disadvantage recorded by the SEIFA scores is clearly evident in the number of children presenting in kindergarten and preschool with social and developmental delays and concerns. Staff are needing to increasingly draw on social work skills rather than

teaching which is impacting on the educational development of other children.

The Shire of Manjimup has a higher than state average statistic of drug/illegal substance activity. Education staff are increasingly concerned with the number of children presenting with substance abuse and alcohol related syndromes.


Local agencies have established an Early Years steering group to identify key recommendations to address the growing concerns.

- **Mental Health**

Locally, agencies are reporting an increase in clients with mental illness. Agency feedback indicates that clients are experiencing 3 to 6 week waiting periods for counselling. Most service agencies in Manjimup are ill equipped to deal with the growing number of clients presenting with mental illness and Counselling services are operating at capacity.

Thank you again for this opportunity, should you require any additional information I may be contacted on 9771 7750 or email gail.cutts@manjimup.wa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



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Director Community Services.