



### **3 Minute Constituency Statement**

#### **Main Committee**

31 May 2010

Sharon Grierson MP

**Sharon Grierson** (Newcastle) (4:27 PM) —I rise to update the House with some good news on the Lambton Family Medical Centre, which I have raised in the House before. The centre was closed at very short notice—24 hours. The patients and staff were not formally notified. The records were transferred and there was a loss of doctors and loss of continuity of care. The good news though is that tomorrow the Lambton Family Medical Centre will be reopening.

Patients were very active and vocal after the closure. They gave the very strong message to Primary Health Care, which had been the manager/owner of the original practice, that they were not pleased with the unannounced closure, with the insensitivity shown to the needs of many older patients who frequent the Lambton medical centre, with the inability of patients to access their records and with being asked for photo ID and payment. Some of the older patients have never had a licence and do not have a passport. The handling of these processes by Primary Health Care was insensitive and of course distressed many people.

The work of GP Access, my staff and I, the local media and hundreds of constituents who turned up on the streets outside that centre has brought about a better outcome. But this event does raise some very important issues for all governments to consider. The Rudd government has responded to some of those. The first is the notification of closures. The second is the management of patient records. The third relates to the commercial arrangements that people enter into that restrain trade. To restrain trade when there is already a shortage of GPs seems to me to be unconscionable. The fourth relates to litigation.

I urge Primary Health Care Australia again, as I have done personally, to drop any legal action and allow the Lambton Family Medical Centre and its previous doctors to continue in practice without the threat of legal action hanging over anyone's head. Primary Health Care is a major deliverer of GP services in this nation; it can and should, at its Charlestown Centre, now focus on delivering good patient care from that centre and desist from legal action around the Lambton Family Medical Centre.

I would also like to say that some of the peak bodies that I wrote to have responded and there is now a draft code of conduct that goes to some of those issues. I urge the profession to make sure that draft code of practice and conduct is strongly enforced and always values patient centred care. I would like to say a big thank you

to the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and Nicola Roxon, the health minister, who shared great interest in this situation. Our e-records announced in the budget—and I urge the opposition to consider passing that legislation—give patients control over their records, something which is sorely needed.

The other infrastructure grants, nurse practitioner grants and diabetes plans announced in the budget are all aimed at assisting the local GP to survive in a very competitive world. I thank everyone involved and send my best wishes to the Lambton Family Medical Centre on its reopening tomorrow. *(Time expired)*