



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle

Media Release

21 July 2004

LABOR BACKS HUNTER GP ACCESS AFTER HOURS

Labor's announcement today to commit to ongoing funding of the Hunter GP After Hours Service (GPAAH) and its promotion of our service as a benchmark model nationally is welcome news for everyone in the region.

While the Minister for Health and Liberal MP, Bob Baldwin, continue to fudge the figures and deny that the Hunter GPAAH service will be forced to close its doors in March 2005 without government support, Labor has been consulting with patients and GPs and doing the hard policy work to ensure our bulk-billing after hours service is retained.

This policy is the result of extensive consultation with the community and determined representation by all Labor MPs in the region.

When the Shadow Minister for Health, Julia Gillard, visited Newcastle last year to celebrate Medicare's 20th birthday and launch the *Newcastle Medicare Report*, she met with local health professionals to hear first-hand about the success of the Hunter GPAAH service.

Labor understands that the Hunter GPAAH is an essential service in our community. My Labor colleagues and I have worked hard to promote this service as an innovative model with good outcomes for everyone – a model that is fully deserving of Federal government support.

Newcastle has led the way in the delivery of After Hours services and I'm very pleased that Labor has today delivered a great outcome for Newcastle.

Only a Latham Labor government will guarantee future funds for the Hunter GPAAH service and promote the Hunter model as a benchmark for the delivery of after hours services.

I congratulate the Hunter Urban Division of General Practice, the 240 doctors working in the service and the tens of thousands of patients and community representatives who have lobbied hard for the retention of the Hunter GPAAH service.

Labor has heard our message and has today delivered great news for Newcastle and the Hunter. In a region where bulk billing rates have plummeted and there is a chronic shortage of GPs and other health professionals, Labor's plan for *Medicare After Hours* will ensure good health outcomes for the people of this region.

Labor's plan for improved access to Medicare services puts patients first, improves access to bulk billing and eases the pressure on public hospital emergency departments. For the sake of the nation's health we need a Labor government.

For more information contact Ms Sharon Grierson on 4926 1555

Newcastle
Suite 7, 451 Hunter Street
Newcastle NSW 2300
Ph: 02-4926 1555 Fax: 02-4926 1895
e-mail: Sharon.Grierson.MP@aph.gov.au



Canberra
Suite R2 88
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600
Ph: 02-6277 4221 Fax: 02-6277 8461
Web Page: www.newcastle-aph.com