

Golden Bay's health future is assured with integration

By Chris Hill

Pause a minute and ask yourself - would we, who have spent so long trying to improve health facilities in Golden Bay, agree to something substandard?

Because that is why the Joan Whiting trustees say they have withdrawn from the development of Golden Bay's integrated family health facility.

They say they have not withdrawn support from integration; they just don't like the carefully considered plan everyone else involved in the project has agreed is the best way forward.

This latest disagreement is not just about slight reductions in room sizes or sharing ensuites. It is a mindset about what integration actually means. Joan Whiting Trustees have always wanted a separate rest home at the hospital. And even though we've tried really hard, it is a philosophical difference that cannot be bridged.

Integration is about providing Golden Bay with health services yet to be experienced anywhere else in New Zealand. It literally involves cradle to grave health care - which is why we continue to use the word *family*, in describing the facility.

Having a hospital, a medical centre and rest home in one place allows the needs of all Golden Bay people to be looked after in a careful and cohesive way.

In designing this unique health system, we're looking forward 10 and 20 years to when there will be an avalanche of health care demands from the baby boomer generation - and their kids. We will need to be so much smarter in dealing with the myriad of needs of that population bubble.

That ranges from how we use the increasingly scarce time of our doctors, to better use of the technical knowledge and experience of trained nurses. It also means dealing with our physical isolation by tapping into technology.

We started down this road to integration with two key aims – keeping trained health professionals in Golden Bay, and keeping health services.

Those goals remain the same.

We remain absolutely confident the whole facility will be a fantastic asset for the Bay. It is disparaging to our highly trained and competent clinicians who have contributed to the design to suggest we would allow the planned facilities for our elder people to be substandard.

All the way through the people of the Bay have worried about the cost of this project. Believe me, so have we. Any building project ends up costing more than you initially plan; that is why we have continued to keep the costs under control.

The suggestion we are being underhand in our dealings with the community is not a fair or accurate representation. The processes followed to get to this point have involved rigorous and thoughtful debate by experienced clinicians, both those that work in the Bay and many others who have the expertise to assist in creating a facility that is clinically sound. As trustees we rely on this expertise.

Unfortunately the quantity surveyors' costing of the building highlighted the need to reduce the cost of the facility by \$600,000. The process to achieve this involved all parties contributing to the project. The result of this work brought about the small reduction in room size and bringing together the lounge/dining areas.

There has been nothing underhand in this approach. It has been an essential response to ensure the facility can go ahead. Given the trustees and members of the clinical group and IMG are all committed to doing all we can to keep rest home beds in the Bay we see no other choice. We are not in the privileged position of holding onto a dream that is not affordable.

Last Wednesday's Mail editorial urged that *the focus must be kept on achieving the best outcome for the Bay community; foremost those who will rely on the new facility.*

That's exactly our focus. For the elderly people of our community to be able to enjoy the warm, friendly, comfortable and safe rest home facilities, who will be able to seamlessly move into carefully designed continuing care and to spend their days among their loved ones, near their homes.

We're also focused on the young families, the babies, the middle aged with increasing health problems, and all of the people who provide that care.

This is not just about rest home care. Yes the plans we have agreed to (we're up to the 9th version of the current design!) do better-integrate the rest home zone into the overall facility.

A key aspect pointed out again and again is that this facility must be homely for our elders who live there. I have no doubt the wonderful family and homely atmosphere that both Joan Whiting and our Community Hospital are renowned for will continue. Both of my parents spent years at the hospital and I was humbled by the care they received and the way our family was treated. I have particular memories of very special Christmases spent at the hospital.

This is what creates a home. And members of our community turning up with whitebait, scallops and the like and to sing, read to and give companionship to our elderly people.

I go back to what I said at the start. Do you really think we would build something that is not fit for purpose? Why would we – and how would we be permitted by the rule-makers?

The sad fact remains unless we can find about \$700,000 from the local, community and national funding sources, this project will not get off the ground.

We need every person in Golden Bay to get behind this project if they want to keep our health services in the longer term.

That means cash, it means donations in kind – and many wonderful people are already offering this – and it means a full commitment to making it happen.

Golden Bay has done this so many times in the past – for the original medical centre, and over the years for Joan Whiting. They also worked hard to keep the community hospital when it was threatened with closure in the 1990s.

A significant number of people are putting their heart and soul into making this work. Please help make this happen and let us get on with delivering something that will be for everyone.

+ Chris Hill is chair of Golden Bay Community Health – Te Hauora O Mohua Trust, the community property trust that will own the integrated family health centre facility. She is also, on behalf of Manawhenua ki Mohua, a member of IMG and of the Clinical Leadership Group that has been intimately involved in designing both the health service and the building planned for Golden Bay.