

Wednesday 14 July 2010

COALITION COMMITS TO BUILD BALLARAT HELIPAD

The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition if elected in November will build a helipad at Ballarat, reaffirming a commitment made eight years ago for a helipad at the Ballarat Base Hospital.

The Coalition has long held the view that this helipad is urgently required and would save lives.

As part of its commitment the Coalition will allocate up to \$2 million to build a helipad at Ballarat Base Hospital and to undertake an engineering scoping study to determine the most favourable site and configuration for a helipad, to report back before the end of June 2011.

The Coalition has recognised the urgent need for a hospital-based helipad for years and as Ballarat and the region continues to grow, we are committing to providing the best possible health services.

This is a win for the local community, one which will help save lives in Ballarat and has been needed for years.

For too long the Ballarat community has been taken for granted by Labor and the Liberal Nationals Coalition has a real plan to improve Ballarat's ambulance response times.

In 2002, the Opposition recognised the need for a hospital-based helipad and in 2004, during a Parliamentary debate in the Upper House, that commitment was reaffirmed by Liberal and National Party MPs.

Yet during that debate in 2004, Labor voted against a helipad for Ballarat, effectively turning its back on the community and demonstrating just how out of touch Labor is.

Six years on, Labor has refused the people of Ballarat this life-saving facility at the hospital, instead forcing helicopters to land on the oval.

John Brumby and Labor have dithered and delayed, refusing over many years to support a life-saving helipad in Ballarat.

Our commitment to the Ballarat community is strong and we will build a hospital-based helipad. It is a necessity and it will save lives.

Policy

There is no question that response times and transfer times will improve, and lives will be saved. Ballarat is the largest hospital in the Grampians region and residents deserve the very best health services.

The community has campaigned for a helipad for years and the Brumby Labor Government has ignored their pleas.

I applaud those community activists who have kept the fight going for the helipad. I also applaud the doctors and other clinicians who have been prepared to support the helipad despite Labor's opposition over the last decade.

Now it appears that local MPs, in a cynical election ploy, have called for the Premier to move on a helipad.

John Brumby should unequivocally join me today in committing to a Ballarat Hospital-based helipad.

The Coalition's announcement will give heart to those who have fought for so long for this vital service.

Ballarat as a regional hospital deserves a helipad given its prominent role in the Grampians region, and that the Coalition will conduct proper consultation with the community and the City of Ballarat to ensure all reasonable planning issues are considered.

The Department of Health in conjunction with the Ballarat Base Hospital will lead discussion. St John of God must also be considered a partner in this process and will be involved in discussions.

Clinical staff at the Ballarat Base Hospital and St John of God will play a key role in ensuring that clinical matters are dealt with, as will Air Ambulance Victoria in relation to clinical and aviation issues.