



**Hospitals today – schools tomorrow
13 June 2008**

Small regional schools will be the Rann Government's next target after its assault on country hospitals.

Last week's State Budget slashed services from eight country hospitals on Eyre Peninsula due to the Government's population-based funding policy.

Now the Government has its sights set on small schools with a proposed "per student" funding formula.

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said she feared for the future of regional health and education.

"Mike Rann's population-based funding formula means that hospitals and schools can be declared unviable as numbers decline," Mrs Penfold said.

"His plan is to close hospitals by starving them of funds and schools are likely to receive the same treatment

"The burden of costs in time, money, health and distances for country people to travel are not being taken into account.

"I get the feeling that while the government wants income generated from the regions, we are a major inconvenience and that they would do without us if they could - but as they can't, they will ignore our needs as much as possible."

Mrs Penfold said hospitals are losing services resulting in the loss of doctors, nurses and staff.

"It is only a matter of time before families are forced to leave regional communities to be closer to western world health facilities not provided in their own towns," Mrs Penfold said.

"This will have a domino impact on businesses and other facilities affecting schools that will put even more of them into the small schools category. It's a vicious circle."

Mrs Penfold said the Government has been depriving rural schools of funding for many years.

"It horrifies me to think that some families will be forced to decide between home schooling or travelling several hours a day to attend their nearest school or leaving altogether," she said.