



## 'Disappointed' Minister outlines his position

Minister Michael Finneran this week expressed disappointment at the fact that HAC chairperson John McDermott did not read out correspondence which he (Minister Finneran) had sent to the organisation ahead of last Thursday night's meeting.

"I responded by email to Ms. Maura Quigley (Secretary, HAC) on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010 and also forwarded a letter to Mr. John McDermott, Chairman of the Hospital Action Committee stating I had a prior commitment in Slane, Co. Meath and also in Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny that night.

"I am disappointed to learn that my correspondence with the Secretary and Chairman was not read out at the meeting, considering that I have had ongoing contact with John

McDermott, Chairman of the Hospital Action Committee and a number of the Consultants at Roscommon County Hospital regarding the services at the Hospital.

"I am further disappointed from what was related to me, there seems to be an attempt to politicise the Hospital issue at the meeting.

"The people of Roscommon will be aware that I secured a political decision in September 2006 to retain the services at Roscommon County Hospital. The position is that all the development at the hospital since 1997 is a result of my political intervention with Government. These developments include a major extension, new Accident & Emergency Department, doubling of Consultants appointments, provision of a CT Scanner,

and a substantial increase in front-line and ancillary staff.

"In 2006 following the political decision to retain services at the Hospital I did alert the people of Roscommon to the fact that 70% of the people of County Roscommon requiring inpatient surgery were opting for hospitals other than Roscommon County Hospital. At that time I stated it was of vital importance that the people of Roscommon use the Services or lose them.

"However, to date I have no indication from the Health Service Executive, or from Government, of any proposed changes to the services provided at the Roscommon County Hospital" concluded Minister Finneran.



Pictured at the HAC public meeting in the Abbey Hotel on Thursday night last were John McDermott, Cllr. Paula McNamara and Una Ni Chuinn. Pic: Andrew Fox.



Cllr. Valerie Byrne pictured at the HAC public meeting in the Abbey Hotel on Thursday night last. Pic: Andrew Fox.

## New Clinical Director in charge of local hospitals

Dr. David O'Keeffe has been appointed as Clinical Director, Acute and Continuing Care Services for the Galway/Roscommon area. The new role encompasses the duties of the former General Manager post with additional responsibility for Portiuncula and Roscommon County Hospitals.

Dr. O'Keeffe, a Consultant Radiologist from GUH, is a member of the Irish Medical Council and a former President of the Irish Hospital Consultants Association, with over 17 years as a senior clinician and contributor to the ongoing development of Irish health care. Welcoming his new role Dr. O'Keeffe said "it is a sign of confidence that the HSE has in our hospitals that we have been chosen as the first HSE Hospital Group for clinical leadership in a management role. I am looking forward to working with the staff at GUH, Portiuncula and Roscommon and the College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at NUI Galway to build a strong, cohesive service for our patients with strong links to the community we serve.

"We are in a different place now, economically and clinically with the introduction of quality standards that puts the patient, patient safety and clinical governance at the heart of everything we do. Resources may be limited but I am confident that if we work together, draw from our collective pooled experience and skills, we can meet the challenges common to all of the hospitals across the hospital group."

Mr. John Hennessy, RDO, outlined that this appointment was extremely important for the people of Galway and Roscommon. He says, "There are changes coming as we move towards a licensed hospital system and a more integrated community service but our goal is to be ready for that change and to be in the best position to provide the safest, quality service in the most appropriate place. The appointment of a Clinical Director to manage four hospital sites as one integrated unit will ensure that Galway and Roscommon acute hospitals are in the best position to meet these changing health standards."

# HAC wants meeting with key HSE figure, Minister Finneran

Over 350 people attended last Thursday night's public meeting in the Abbey Hotel at which the latest heightened concerns regarding the future of Roscommon County Hospital were discussed.

The meeting, hosted by the HAC (Hospital Action Committee), heard criticism of the absence on the night of Minister of State, Michael Finneran.

While HAC chairperson Mr. John McDermott included Minister Finneran when listing 'apologies' on behalf of invited personnel who were not able to be present, the Fianna Fail Minister of State has since complained that correspondence which he sent to the HAC was not read to the audience.

At the meeting members of the public called on Minister Finneran to move to safeguard the future of the hospital.

Amid calls for protest marches – including one to Dail Eireann – the course of action finally decided upon was for Minister Finneran and HSE West Regional Director of Operations Mr. John Hennessy to be invited to meet with the HAC. Notwithstanding

some strong criticism of him on the night, some speakers had made the point that it was desirable to work with Minister Finneran in seeking to secure the future of the hospital.

John McDermott, chairperson of the HAC, made it clear at the meeting that the HAC maintains that the HSE approach to Roscommon Hospital represents the implementation of Government policy.

Mr. McDermott and HAC Councillors Paula McNamara and Valerie Byrne warned that people will die unnecessarily if the downgrading of Roscommon Hospital materialises.

Mr. McDermott said that the latest threat to the hospital arose from the appointment of Dr. David O'Keeffe to the new 'super-manager' role which will involve him overseeing University College Hospital in Galway as well as Roscommon Hospital and Portiuncula in Ballinasloe.

The HAC chairperson said that this appointment will result in a negative impact on budgets and facilities at Roscommon Hospital.

The meeting heard warnings that A&E Dept. opening hours in Roscommon will inevitably be reduced as a consequence of recent developments.

The HAC chairperson warned that HSE West Regional Director of Operations, John Hennessy, had recently said in a radio interview that Roscommon and Portiuncula would deliver day surgery, meaning in-patient surgery would be lost – along with the 24-hour services.

Mr. McDermott urged the people of Roscommon to fight for their hospital services and reminded those present of the fate of hospital services in Monaghan and Ennis.

Mr. Pdraig Mulligan, Assistant General Secretary of IMPACT and chairperson of the Portiuncula Hospital Group, said that the HSE is implementing Government policy and it was time the people shouted stop.

He said the community will not forgive local politicians if they do not resist the feared downgrading. He appealed to the public to "join us" in sending a message to local Minister Michael Finneran to the

effect that the public will not stand by and accept any downgrading.

HAC PRO Una Quinn said that the HAC should "use" Minister Finneran and the campaigners should seek a meeting with both him and Mr. Hennessy of the HSE. "Minister Finneran needs to be made accountable, he's where we're at and we should use him."

HAC Cllr. Paula McNamara said that Minister Finneran's call on people to use the hospital more (in order to help safeguard its future) was not necessarily relevant as Portiuncula had come under threat despite that facility being very busy.

Cllr. Valerie Byrne called for people to stand up to the Government to ensure that would-be patients do not die on the roads in the event of having to bypass Roscommon Hospital at some point in the future.

Deputy Denis Naughten (Fine Gael) and local councillors also addressed the meeting, outlining their concerns for the future of the hospital and their support for the campaign to retain services there.