

Media Statement regarding Discretionary Rate Rebate decision by Adelaide Hills Council

- Stirling Hospital is profoundly disappointed and frustrated by Adelaide Hills Council's decision to deny our request for a discretionary rate rebate. This decision strikes at the heart of a community institution that has tirelessly served Adelaide Hills residents for 97 years.
- Without this modest support from the Council, Stirling Hospital faces serious challenges in its mission to deliver essential healthcare services to the community.
- As a non-profit, which does not receive any government funding, the requested rebate of up to \$25,000 annually could have provided crucial financial relief to help us meet significant costs, including a \$500,000 upgrade to our operating room ventilation systems to meet compliance and safety standards. This Council decision not only fails to recognise the vital role we play in the community but disregards the financial realities we face as we work hard to keep our doors open.
- The reasons offered for this refusal centered on the Council's own financial mismanagement, which has led to a substantial budget deficit. This response reflects an alarming lack of accountability, especially given that the requested rebate represents a mere 0.057% of the Council's total \$44m in rates revenue, as outlined in the 22-23 Annual Report.
- We are further troubled by the inconsistency in the Council's decision-making, which has seen other not-for-profits granted rate rebates. This arbitrary approach raises serious concerns about fairness and the Council's genuine commitment to supporting essential services.
- Our 80 staff members, along with the 42 visiting medical specialists and 15 consulting specialists who utilise the hospital, are dedicated to sustaining a level of care that local public hospitals cannot manage alone.
- Stirling Hospital provides ratepayers and the local community with ongoing access to a range of essential healthcare supports, including radiology, pathology, physiotherapy and respiratory services. We also help to relieve pressure on an overwhelmed public health system and bolster the Adelaide Hills economy through jobs and contracts, as well as generate flow-on benefits to local suppliers such as pharmacies and hospitality businesses.
- By refusing our request, the Council has chosen to ignore the voices and needs of its rate payers and residents, who support our ongoing presence in the local community.