

Border being 'left behind'

Former mayor, 88, appalled by hospital

BY SOPHIE BOYD

PEOPLE'S health and lives are at risk because the Border is being neglected and left behind by its city counterparts, a Wodonga stalwart believes.

Former mayor and ex-Wodonga hospital board member Pam Stone said a visit to Albury Base hospital left her feeling "appalled" and "abandoned".

On Sunday, the 88-year-old was rushed to Albury Base Hospital after an out-of-hours doctor said her blood pressure was too high and she was at risk of a stroke.

Three days before Mrs Stone had been diagnosed with thunderstorm asthma.

She left Albury Base Hospital without being seen.

"I was appalled, absolutely appalled and I'm not the only one it's happened to," she said. "I sat in the waiting room for more than two-and-a-half hours ... the only thing that happened was they took my blood pressure.

"There's something wrong with the system, I was on the board of Wodonga hospital and I know how hospitals should be run and what should happen."

Albury Wodonga Health chief executive Leigh McJames said despite an increase of demand recently, the emergency department was meeting all key performance indicators.

A government spokeswoman said across Albury Wodonga Health 89.5 per cent of ambulance patients were transferred within the recommended time, and all category-one patients were treated immediately.

Mrs Stone claimed when she arrived three ambulances were waiting at the hospital on 'bed block'.

It comes as Albury paramedic James Kydd said all four ambulances were unable to respond to calls last Thursday about 5.30pm as paramedics waited for patients to be admitted.

Mr Kydd criticised the government for prioritising "vanity projects" over health care, claiming Albury's paramedic numbers remain the same as in 1993.

Mrs Stone is still experiencing symptoms and seeking treatment. She said the region's representatives needed to push hard for investment.

"I don't know what the



FIX THE SYSTEM: Pam Stone, former Wodonga mayor, believes something must be done to ensure border infrastructure is keeping up with growth after a trip to hospital left her feeling abandoned. **Picture:** MARK JESSER

problem is but Albury and Wodonga seem to be being left behind in general, just look at the train service," she said.

"What pressure is being

put on to ensure people in regional areas, who pay the same taxes as city residents, get the same facilities they do? Are facilities keeping pace with our growth?"

Mr McJames said a masterplan was being created for the new future-proofed emergency department with more beds, announced in the 2017 budget.

He said a service plan looking at demographics, population growth and age distributions over the next 10 to 20 years, had been completed.