Humphries on tour

Minister for Mental Health, Healthy Lifestyles and Western NSW, Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries was in Bourke last week on a tour of his electorate and to see just how people are coping with the drought at the top of his list of priorities.

In Bourke, he met with local allied health and mental health workers looking and what they are doing and how successful they have been in coordinating support particularly for rural people during his drought.

Mr Humphries said Mayor Andrew Lewis had also raised concerns about the future of Bourke's birthing unit, following the statement from Western NSW Local Health District Chief Executive, Scott McLachlan, which made it appear unlikely that a birthing service would be reinstated in Bourke.

Mr Humphries said the Western NSW LHD would be meeting with the community to find a solution.

"They are going to come in and have a chat with all the community to try and reconfigure what a model should look like for Bourke," said Mr Humphries.

"To get a full birthing centre obviously you need obstetrician, anaesthetist and midwives. Bourke over time has had maybe two of the three legs in there, but we haven’t been able to line up with providers like Ochre and with the Health System. So what Scott wants to do is re-look at the whole issue and look at what is a good birthing option for Bourke. If we can’t provide a full maternity unit service because we can’t get the right staff configuration - and maybe there is a bit of reluctance because some people don’t necessarily want the full responsibility of being on call and wearing that full responsibility - we might have to look at the next step down."

Mr Humphries also stopped by the newly constructed teacher accommodation in Green Street and congratulated the Teacher Housing Authority on their work, which makes it easier to attract people to the western region.

"In the Barwon electorate we have over a third of the teacher housing in the state and one of the things I’m always keen on is that if we are going to attract young people and families and the biggest thing is accommodation," he said.

"The Teacher Housing Authority, as a public housing provider, are the best I know. They do a great job and just seeing what they’ve done here in Bourke is fantastic and it means the recruiting is that much easier. Bourke is a great place for young people, it is good to get the message out that it is a great place to live and work."