



Office of the Minister

23 January 2003.

Mr Des Browne MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast BT 4 3SJ



DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH AND
CHILDREN
AN ROINN
SLÁINTE AGUS LEANAÍ

Shaping a
Healthier Future

Dear Des

I refer to previous correspondence and discussions concerning the scope that exists for improved cross-border co-operation on acute hospital services, in the context of your Department's consultation paper, *Developing Better Services: Modernising Hospitals and Reforming Structures*.

I am aware that you are anxious to reach an early decision on the location of a new acute hospital to serve the Fermanagh/Tyrone area and that in that context questions have been raised about whether the hospitals at Sligo and Cavan/Monaghan would be in a position to provide services to people in south and west Fermanagh who are willing to avail of services there. As I understand it, your Department's analysis suggests that around 820 people might be expected to seek services at Cavan/Monaghan and a further 120 at Sligo, not all of whom would require admission as in-patients.

Following consultation with the Chief Executive Officers of the North Western and North Eastern Health Boards, our assessment is that, in aggregate terms patient flows of this order could be accommodated. However, it would be necessary to look at the caseload likely to be involved in terms of specialty and complexity in more detail in order to make a definitive commitment in this regard. In regard to future developments here, the Government is committed in the Health Strategy to a further expansion of capacity in the acute hospitals. The further analysis required to determine the specialty and geographic distribution of the additional beds is currently underway in the Department.

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I trust that this will be of assistance to you in your decision-making process.
Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information or
clarification.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Micheál Martin".

Micheál Martin T.D.
Minister for Health and Children