

Oncology Services

to move to Old Hospital site



The Hawkesbury Living Cancer Trust is planning a move for their long waited oncology and infusion facility to the old Hawkesbury Hospital site.

After a lengthy negotiation process with both local council and the federal government, the move will ensure that the Len and Margaret Peel Chemotherapy and Infusion Unit will be accessible to all patients in the Hawkesbury.

The old hospital site will incorporate all the services from the original plan proposed for March St, Richmond, which includes six chemotherapy and infusion beds, pathology and pharmacy services, the relocation of Specialist Services and underground parking for patients. There is also the possibility of the breast screening van currently on the new hospital site to be housed permanently.

Group CEO of Richmond Club and Hawkesbury Living Kimberley Talbot said that this proposal would finally bring the plan for chemotherapy in the region to fruition, while also making use of a notable artefact of the Hawkesbury's history.

"This latest development provides a solution to a number of issues we were facing with the original plan," she said. "The old hospital site will still allow us to improve the

accessibility of health care to the region deliver it to the public as soon as we can."

The new plan also means that construction and relocation of the facility will be fast tracked for completion by the end of the year.

The site, which includes the old hospital building and adjacent Johnson Building, has a colourful history in medicine. First used as a convict hospital in 1825, it was taken over by the Hawkesbury Benevolent Society in the mid 19th Century and remained accessible to all residents of the district for over 100 years. In 1911 it underwent significant renovations in the Federation Arts and Crafts style rebuilding that is visible today. In 1996 services moved across the road to the new hospital site and the building was utilised as office space. It has been unoccupied for over 12 months.

Ms Talbot said that the relocation gives the Cancer Trust an opportunity to work cooperatively with Catholic Health. "The co-location of services is a requirement for federal funding for public patients," she said. "It enables us to work in collaboration with Hawkesbury Hospital and Catholic Health at a time when the North-West Growth Sector in Sydney requires us to develop our healthcare infrastructure."

The Cancer Trust is currently looking for tenders for both the oncology and pathology facilities. The relocation would allow specialist doctors to be based on the site to administer treatment to patients.

According to Ms. Talbot, the new plan requires a sustainable business model that the Cancer Trust, Richmond Club and local council are all working tirelessly on. In the meantime, she said that the support from the community had been overwhelming.

"All the donations that we have received from the community add up, regardless of how big or small they are" she said. "For example, I recently had a donation of \$3000 from the Richmond Rotary Club that will make a significant contribution to the development. Of course, we will not be able to rely on the generosity of the community alone."

The original site on March St in Richmond will still see development, with a proposed 33 bed extension to Hawkesbury Living planned for the future. However the focus is now on delivering what was promised to the community and utilising what is a significant building in the medical history of the Hawkesbury.

