



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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‘RUSTY’ PRIEST HONOURED IN \$150 MILLION REDEVELOPMENT OF CONCORD HOSPITAL

A re-elected Baird Government will build the nation’s first comprehensive care centre for returned servicemen and women and their families as part of a \$150 million redevelopment at Concord Hospital.

Health Minister Jillian Skinner made the announcement today in the hospital’s Kokoda Track Memorial Rose Garden where she revealed the centre will be named in honour of the late Godfrey ‘Rusty’ Priest AO, the long-standing president of the NSW Returned and Services League (RSL).

Mrs Skinner was joined by Mr Priest’s daughter Carole-Anne Priest and son Tim Priest as she announced work on the Rusty Priest Centre for Rehabilitation and Aged Care will begin in the second term of a Baird Government.

“In Australia, there is currently no comprehensive centre providing an integrated model of care for defence force personnel which treats the ‘whole person’ and their loved ones,” Mrs Skinner said.

“Given the number of defence force personnel based in Sydney and Concord’s proud history as a repatriation hospital, it is a natural choice as the site for such a centre of excellence.

“I knew Rusty Priest well - as my husband was a naval officer, he and I shared many conversations about military matters.

“Given his tireless advocacy for veterans, and his deep ties with Concord Hospital, it is fitting we honour Rusty in this way - and at this time, as the nation prepares to mark the centenary of Gallipoli and the birth of the Anzac legend.”

The \$150 million committed today will allow Sydney Local Health District to implement its plan to build a six-storey building on the grounds of Concord Hospital.

It will be known as the Rusty Priest Centre for Rehabilitation and Aged Care will include floors dedicated to acute aged care, sub-acute rehabilitation, psycho geriatric care, as well as an acute medical and surgical ward and ambulatory care.

One floor will be dedicated as the National Centre for Excellence for Defence Force Personnel.

“No hospital in the nation can boast as proud a service to the military and veteran communities as that delivered by Concord Hospital for more than 70 years,” Mrs Skinner said.

“This new centre of excellence will be the national and state centre for trauma-related disorders for defence force personnel - those returning from overseas tours of duty and those who serve at home.

“Its aim will be to provide world-class physical rehabilitation whilst managing the acute psychological needs and social wellbeing of patients, including re-employment skills.”

Mrs Skinner was joined at the hospital today by Member for Drummoyne John Sidoti and Member for Strathfield Charles Casuscelli.

Mr Sidoti said only the Baird Government could be relied upon to deliver infrastructure for Concord Hospital, such as \$9 million, 20-bed palliative care centre which opened in June last year.

“This announcement is a tribute to Rusty Priest and everything he represented. It also honours every nurse, doctor, volunteer who works in our hospital - they deserve the best facilities and we are delivering them,” he said.

Mr Casuscelli said: “This is a great day for the community and for the Priest family. This \$150 million commitment will ensure Concord Hospital can provide state-of-the-art care to meet the needs of the growing, ageing community.”

Mrs Skinner said the Baird Government has a proven record in delivering health infrastructure.

“In our first term, we have spent almost \$5 billion upgrading the state’s hospitals and health services. If re-elected, we will make a record investment of more than \$5 billion in health infrastructure over four years,” Mrs Skinner said.

“In short, our health infrastructure spend will reach almost \$10 billion over an eight-year period, which is more than Labor spent in its entire 16 years in government.”

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