



14 May 2009

***Caring Together*: Stage two forum for public hospital improvements**

Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, is hosting a forum with leading experts today (14 May) to ensure stage two of the State Government's *Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for NSW* achieves real and on-going improvements in the public hospital system.

Mr Della Bosca said the first forum in December last year set the way forward in developing the \$485 million *Caring Together* action plan – today's forum will guide the next steps in building a sustainable health care system.

"Building a sustainable health care system requires a different way to deliver services – we need to ensure we are using the available resources effectively to deliver the very best possible health care to the largest number of people," the Minister said.

"We do not have an unlimited budget and even if we did we do not have the available workforce - due to a global shortage - to deliver highly specialised health services in every town and every suburb.

"Sustainability will require new ways of collaboration between hospitals and health services to make sure the highest levels of patient care and safety can be delivered in every community in metropolitan and regional areas.

"It must be a system-wide approach that upholds the interests of people in all communities – from Tweed Heads to Eden and Sydney to Broken Hill.

"This is a key challenge for today's forum and a key challenge for the state-wide clinician-led hospital review.

"The focus of the *Caring Together* action plan is to build on the great tradition of the NSW health system where the care and treatment of the patient is at the centre of everything we do.

"The plan invests in 500 clinical support officers to give senior nurses the opportunity to devote maximum attention to patients, not paperwork," Mr Della Bosca said.

Other initiatives include:

- A Nurse in Charge or Midwife in Charge in every ward.
- Introduction of Clinical Initiative Nurses for emergency departments;
- Male and female wards where possible;
- More clinical pharmacists;
- More specialists for outer metropolitan and rural areas.

"As noted in the Garling Report, NSW has one of the better public health care systems in the world but we need to meet the challenges of the future, including the rising cost of health care and an ageing population," Mr Della Bosca said.

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“*Caring Together* is the result of extensive consultation across the State and from working closely with doctors, nurses and other health staff,” the Minister said.

“These initiatives are only the beginning of important changes to continue to deliver the best possible health care and to ensure on-going patient care and safety.

“While the NSW Government has a comprehensive plan to improve patient care and has supported 134 out of 139 Garling Report recommendations, the Opposition has come up with a flimsy six point plan which will divert \$300 million away from front line services.

“Barry O’Farrell and his shadow health spokesperson want to increase the number of Area Health Services from eight to 20.

“Their plan will result in more red tape, more managers, more offices and fewer resources for clinicians and patients,” Mr Della Bosca added.