

# Funding an emergency

by Amanda Perry

MORE funding is needed to improve emergency department performance at our local hospital and reduce surgery waiting lists, according to Shadow Health Minister Jillian Skinner.

Mrs Skinner visited Windsor last Monday, where she met with Hawkesbury MP Ray Williams and Hawkesbury Mayor Bart Bassett to discuss western Sydney's ailing health system.

She referred to figures obtained from the NSW Health Department under the Freedom of Information Act, which show our hospitals are not always meeting the benchmarks when it comes to treating patients, and waiting lists have continued to rise.

According to the figures from September 2009, Hawkesbury Hospital's emergency department was unable to treat 34 per cent of Triage 2 patients (imminently life threatening) within the recommended 10-minute time frame. Other shortcomings included not treating 22 per cent of Triage 3 patients (potentially life threatening) within 30 minutes; and failing to treat Triage 4 patients (potentially serious) within 60 minutes.

In some cases the percentage of patients not treated in time was much lower than other hospitals in the region, but the Triage 2 result was the second worse after Westmead Hospital.

However, if the results are compared to the NSW benchmark targets for triage waiting times, Hawkesbury Hospital is still performing on par or above standard.

Hawkesbury met or exceeded the performance benchmark in four out of the five triage categories.

Hawkesbury Hospital has also challenged the department's figures, saying they are very different from their own.

A spokesperson said that only 20 per cent of patients in the Triage 2 category were not treated in time.

But Mrs Skinner said hospital performance would only get worse as more people move into the north west Sydney region, with the State Government planning for an additional 300,000 to be accommodated in time.

She said developments such as 'The



Shadow Health Minister Jillian Skinner (centre) with Hawkesbury Mayor Bart Bassett and Member for Hawkesbury Ray Williams.

Ponds' were already placing further pressure on Blacktown Hospital.

"Hospitals across Western Sydney are being asked to provide health care for more and more families, but the State Labor Government is cutting staff, and waiting lists are already blowing out to record levels," Mrs Skinner said.

"It's common sense to increase hospital resources to cope with a bigger population, but Health Minister Carmel Tebbutt seems oblivious to her incompetent State Government's planning policies.

"There are nearly 70,000 people waiting for surgery in NSW, many of them live in western Sydney. The latest figures make for unpleasant reading."

Hawkesbury Mayor Bart Bassett said

the government wanted Hawkesbury City Council to approve an additional 5000 new homes in our area, but "without upgrading important infrastructure or increasing staffing levels at local hospitals".

"Last year a doctor resigned from Hawkesbury Hospital in frustration as public patients were forced to wait over a year for elective surgery," he said.

NSW Health Minister Carmel Tebbutt said figures for the July to September quarter 2009, showed the performance of our emergency departments had dipped a little in the face of the increased demand, but overall the performance was on par with the previous quarter. She said the rise in ED presentations was linked to last year's swine flu pandemic.



Sponsors at Hawkesbury Race Club with a \$60,000 cheque for the Hawkesbury Living Cancer Trust.

## \$60,000 raised on race day without one race

DESPITE pouring rain which forced organisers to call off the horse racing, a large amount of money was raised at last Thursday's Charity Raceday at Clarendon.

The target for the Evergreen and Dad and Dave's Turf Charity Raceday was \$50,000, but instead they managed to raise a whopping \$60,000.

The money will go to the Hawkesbury Living Cancer Trust, which now has \$115,000 in the bank to help bring oncology treatment to the Hawkesbury.

The Richmond Club's chief executive officer, Kimberley Talbot, said they were now at the stage of forming the board of trustees, and the oncology services would be deliverable "in the foreseeable future".

"It is viable, we can deliver it. It will be for private patients or those who wish to pay," she said.

Ms Talbot said they had wanted to make the oncology services available to both public and private patients, but that it was an "impossibility" given the public/private debate, and the fact any publicly funded oncology

services would have to be delivered out of a public hospital.

But she said having the services available in the Hawkesbury would mean some patients may decide it is worth paying for the treatment locally because of the cost involved in travelling to other hospitals.

Ms Talbot said the development would be "a community building built on community land", and it may also include cancer counselling services and will be available for other services too.

Vivienne Leggett, Clarendon Racecourse sponsorship and marketing manager, said the rain certainly did not dampen the race goers' spirits last week.

"Everybody turned up, I don't think there was one empty seat," she said.

"It shows we can do anything when we all get together."

The race day was made possible by sponsors Evergreen Turf Vic, Dad and Dave's Turf, Vermont Sands, Hi Quality Turf, Flemming Golf, CLS Investment Services, Hydro Technics Irrigation and Living Turf.

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