

Windsor Court House future questioned

By Anna Yeo

IT'S the longest operating court house in Australia, but come 2015 the doors of Windsor Local Court may close due to a state government budget cut back.

Londonderry MP Bart Bassett stressed the closure of the court was just a proposal at this time, but the local law society is fearing the worst.

The drop in funding for court services — from \$450 million to \$436m — will result in job losses, as \$120m is spent on upgrading and building new courts.

An extra \$192m will be spent over four years to boost police numbers by 489.

Funding for custody management will also be cut by \$22.6m, resulting in jobs being made redundant.

The NSW Budget paper also shows \$3.4m will be cut from the offenders program.

"The Attorney General has made it clear following representations on this matter that this is only a proposal and is not set in stone," Mr Bassett said.

"The Attorney General is not the individual who determines the allocation of resources within the

courts. That is for the Chief Magistrate to decide.

"The Attorney General merely indicated that due to budgetary constraints, there is a need to identify systemic inefficiencies and propose pragmatic solutions to realise savings."

The regional president of the Hawkesbury Nepean Law Society, Rod Storie, condemned the plans of closure, saying he received notification of the move through a letter from the Chief Magistrate saying the changes would come into affect by 2015.

"You can only question the O'Farrell government's and local member's priorities when Windsor Court is being closed down whilst simultaneously the state government announces \$224m for a pathway to Berangaroo, \$1 billion to rebuild the entertainment precinct, \$120m to be spent on the Sydney Cricket Ground whilst simultaneously access to justice is pruned to the stump in the north west," Mr Storie said.

"Windsor Local Court is the longest operating local court in the country.

"Apart from being a fine example of Greenway architecture it



Windsor Court House, built in 1822 and the oldest purpose-built court house in Australia, may be closed down. Picture: Kylie Pitt.

remains a valuable, viable functioning court.

With further development proposed and currently being constructed in the north west, Mr Storie said residents should strongly oppose this proposed closure.

He said local courts were a fundamental form of justice in any community.

"Every criminal matter, either starts or ends in the local court," he said.

"With the proposed closure of the court Hawkesbury residents will

have to travel to Penrith, Mt Druitt or Parramatta for local court matters."

Riverstone MP Kevin Conolly said the Attorney General would see suspended sittings in a court house as a last resort and would be keen to see other proposals.

What's stalling Hawkesbury oncology services?

By Maryann Jenkins

CHEMOTHERAPY services are expected to be delivered at Hawkesbury Hospital by year's end, according to Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District (NBMLHD).

In a statement to the *Gazette* yesterday, chief executive of NBMLHD Kay Hyman said a chemotherapy service to patients in the Hawkesbury area at Hawkesbury Hospital (HDHS) would "most likely" commence in the last quarter of 2013, following staff training.

"The service provided at Hawkesbury Hospital will be linked with the Nepean Cancer Care Centre so patients will be able to receive some chemotherapy regimens locally but

will still have the benefits of connection to a comprehensive cancer care centre," Ms Hyman said.

"In order to ensure that a safe, quality service is provided at Hawkesbury Hospital it is essential that staff receive appropriate training to undertake this new work."

This may come as a disappointment to Hawkesbury Living Cancer Trust's plan for a one-stop oncology centre, with chemotherapy services, at the old Windsor hospital site in George Street.

Chairperson of the Trust, Dr Duncan Guy, told the *Gazette* they were ready to launch into providing oncology services in Hawkesbury when NBMLHD made the announcement in April that chemo-

therapy was coming back to Hawkesbury Hospital before it had the government funding or a contract to deliver the service.

"Catholic Health Care [which operates the hospital] has no contract as yet to provide chemotherapy and will have to find space and parking in the hospital for a chemo unit," Dr Guy said. "They are still in negotiations with the State Health Department and it's taking time."

Meanwhile, plans for oncology services within the Hawkesbury have stalled. According to Dr Guy, two oncology units will not be sustainable in the Hawkesbury, so the Trust's plan, funded by community donations, may not be able to go ahead as first envisaged — for mul-

tidisciplinary oncology, chemotherapy and infusion services — along with community group support services.

"Our objective has always been to meet the needs of the community. We want the biggest and best service here, it doesn't matter who delivers it, but at the moment we have nothing," Dr Guy said.

He added that Catholic Health's funding essentially takes the chemotherapy component out of Trust's business plan so the Trust won't be able to operate all its services.

"We are very keen to work with them to see how the Trust can further enhance services on offer by Catholic Health."

NBMLHD did not comment on whether talks were progressing with Hawkesbury Living.

Kimberley Talbot CEO of Hawkesbury Living Cancer Trust said a meeting at the Trust's request is taking place on Friday with local MPs Bart Bassett and Ray Williams to further discuss the medical reasons as to why the oncology services (chemo infusion) cannot be delivered out of the old Windsor hospital site as planned.

"We do not believe there is a medical reason why services can't operate out of the old Windsor hospital site and deliver a complete service to the Hawkesbury, potentially under the Catholic Health direction, if we all pull together."

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