

Monday, 3 December, 2007

Construction Begins at St Vincent's Integrated Mental Health, Drug & Alcohol Unit

NSW Health Minister, Reba Meagher, today commenced construction of the first inner-city integrated mental health, drug & alcohol and community health facility to be situated at the main St Vincent's Hospital Campus in Darlinghurst.

The NSW Government is providing \$23 million for the new facility – to be built on the site of the existing O'Brien building. St Vincent's sold the current Caritas site earlier this year to fund its component of the \$40 million project.

"This project demonstrates the Government's commitment to investing in revitalizing mental health programs, with the annual budget in NSW now more than \$1 billion," Ms Meagher said.

"The new O'Brien building will allow patients to be accommodated in a secure, purpose-built facility close to the Emergency Department and other services offered by St Vincent's Hospital.

"With an increasing number of patients now presenting with multiple conditions, the co-location of mental health, drug & alcohol and community health facilities will allow for better treatment of these complex patients."

"Patient care and outcomes can be improved as a result."

St Vincent's Alcohol & Drug Service Director, Dr Alex Wodak, said the Hospital's Caritas Mental Health Service, which is located near to the main Hospital site, currently offers the best treatment possible.

However, the buildings that currently house these services are outdated and the quality of service can be improved by integrating delivery onto one site.

Dr Wodak said clients currently receiving counselling for drug & alcohol and other types of addiction at Rankin Court and Gorman House will also receive their treatment in the new building on the main Hospital site.

"Having our three Departments located on the Hospital Campus within the one 21st century modern facility is an important initiative both for our staff and those whom we treat," Dr Wodak said.

"This project is of particular significance as St Vincent's local catchment area is characterised by one of Australia's highest concentrations of homeless people and those with mental health issues and drug & alcohol problems.

"However, the new integrated facility also has broader significance as it will serve the people of Sydney as a whole."

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