

30 April 2007

Paul Lennon
Premier

Lara Giddings
Minister for Health and
Human Services

Railyards Preferred Site for New RHH

Premier Paul Lennon and Health and Human Services Minister Lara Giddings today announced that the Hobart railyards site had been selected by Cabinet as the preferred site for a feasibility study into the construction of a new Royal Hobart Hospital.

The seven-hectare railyards site, between the Cenotaph and Macquarie Wharf, was chosen following a six-month site selection process.

Mr Lennon and Ms Giddings released a 90-page report on the initial site assessment for the RHH redevelopment project.

“The selection of the railyards site is a significant step forward in the biggest development project in Tasmania’s history,” Mr Lennon said.

“This is an exciting opportunity that will deliver long-term benefits for patients and staff for decades to come.

“It will also contribute to the urban regeneration of a key area of the capital.

Mr Lennon said all crown land sites in the CBD had been reviewed by the assessment panel, and the report provided an initial comparison of four sites for the new hospital: the existing hospital site; the railyards; the Campbell Street school site, and the old TCA ground and surrounds on the Domain.

“The report shows that on the initial assessment the railyard site is the best option, but also flags a number of significant issues which need to be addressed before a final site decision is made.

“Cabinet has authorised a detailed site investigation as the next step of the project to address the issues surrounding the railyards.

“The project team will also compare development options on this new site with a base case of a staged redevelopment of the hospital on the current site but incorporating an expanded footprint on adjacent land.

“A base case is a standard feature of developments of this nature.”

Ms Giddings said the redevelopment of the Royal Hobart Hospital presented both huge opportunities and major challenges.

“This massive project is just one part of the Labor Government’s broader commitment to the reform and improvement of Tasmania’s health services,” Ms Giddings said.

“It will deliver a modern hospital to deliver services to be detailed in the soon to be completed Clinical Services Plan, and will complement services in our other acute care hospitals.

“The redevelopment will take a number of years to complete and will provide new facilities in a waterfront environment for patients and staff from Hobart and around the State.

“In the meantime, we will continue to enhance facilities as already planned on the existing RHH site to meet the community’s needs until the new hospital is available.

“The Government is also committed to addressing the capital requirements of the Launceston General and North West Regional hospitals,” Ms Giddings said.

Mr Lennon said the site of the existing hospital is too small to accommodate the building required for a new hospital, and even with the inclusion of a larger footprint on surrounding areas, there would be major redevelopment problems.

“In particular, it would be extremely difficult to maintain hospital services for the extended period required – 10 years or even longer – while major construction is happening on site,” Mr Lennon said.

Mr Lennon said issues to be considered in the detailed investigation of the railyards site included:

- The need to relocate the Hobart rail terminal – a process which could take four-five years;
- An assessment of the impact of and on surrounding activities, such as port operations, the Hobart City Council sewerage plant and caustic soda plant;
- Detailed assessment of contamination, and costing of remedial works;
- Geological tests and evaluations to assess foundation issues – with approximately 70 per cent of the site on reclaimed land;
- A risk assessment of flooding extreme weather events; and

- The capacity of existing services including power, water and sewerage, road access etc, in the railyards area and the cost of potential upgrades.

“Preliminary investigations indicate that the existing ground level is above the highest tidal levels predicted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for the rest of this century.

“However, the hospital itself will be a key element of the essential infrastructure required in any potential disaster and it is obviously vital that we ensure that no foreseeable risk will ensue if the railyards site gets the green light,” Mr Lennon said.

The Assessment Report will be available at:

<http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/agency/rhh/redevelopment.php>

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<http://www.tas.gov.au>