



Lara Giddings, MP

Minister for Health

Monday, 18 May 2009

New Public PET/CT Scanner for the RHH

Public patients will soon have access to a PET/CT scanner at the Royal Hobart Hospital, meaning a comprehensive imaging service will be available for all patients.

Health Minister Lara Giddings said the State Government had decided to continue with its plans for a public scanner at the RHH in the interests of all Tasmanians.

Ms Giddings said the Government was delivering on a recommendation made by Tasmania's Health Plan to deliver a comprehensive cancer service for the entire State.

"The \$100 million improvements announced today for the existing RHH will allow for floor space to be cleared for the new \$3.5 million PET/CT scanner, funded by the Commonwealth in last week's federal budget," Ms Giddings said.

"This is welcome news for public patients, many of whom have still been forced to travel to the mainland for scans even though the Hobart Private's scanner was installed last year.

"Unfortunately, the private PET scanner has not been able to meet the needs of all public patients due to its limited hours of operation and significant cost.

"In the past, PET services were provided free of charge to Tasmanian public patients from centres on the mainland, while the Government subsidised the patient's travel costs.

"However, the private scanner is not able to provide this service free of charge for all public patients and as a consequence the Government has been meeting the cost to ensure it is not passed on to public patients.

"For the first six months of the private machine's operation this cost has been \$51 850.

"Since the beginning of November, 96 patients from the Royal Hobart Hospital have been referred for travel to Melbourne for their scan for a range of clinical and availability reasons.

"We have therefore made the decision that a scanner located at the RHH will be the best possible outcome for public patients into the future."

Ms Giddings said the Government had consistently said that if Tasmania was to have a public scanner it needed to be in Hobart, close to the state-wide oncology service at the Royal and the Menzies Research Centre.

“Some specialised oncology services can only be provided in a safe way in one location in the State, and the PET/CT is an important step in providing a comprehensive service.

“Forging strong research links with the Menzies Research Centre in Hobart is also fundamentally important to the future care of Tasmanian patients.

“Better access to a public scanner will be an invaluable boost to the Menzies’ work, enabling an increase in cutting edge cancer research and treatment,” Ms Giddings said.

Ms Giddings said there had been considerable improvements in the speed and efficiency of PET/CT scanners in the past 18 months and the Royal also intended to use the scanner to perform standard CT scans to boost its usage.

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Filename: Document35
Directory:
Template: C:\Program Files\Microsoft
Office\OFFICE11\Normal.dot
Title:
Subject:
Author: stfletcher
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 19/05/2009 10:12:00 AM
Change Number: 1
Last Saved On:
Last Saved By:
Total Editing Time: 0 Minutes
Last Printed On: 19/05/2009 10:12:00 AM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 2
Number of Words: 475 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 2,712 (approx.)