

Go Ahead for Royal Rehab Redevelopment

TWT EXCLUSIVE

The Royal Rehabilitation Centre in Ryde this week has announced it's in discussion with an international developer - Frasers Property Australia - for the sale of a portion of its land.

Development of the land could start within three months once negotiations are finalised.

This announcement came after The Weekly Times contacted the centre with claims that it was in "a secret deal" with an overseas developer from community rights campaigner and Coalition Against Private Overdevelopment (CAPO) Rolf Clapham.

CAPO will hold a protest in Parry Street Putney this Sunday from 10am starting at Parry Park.

The protest organisers believe this demonstration is to send a clear message to the Royal Rehabilitation Centre management and the developers that the community will not allow this development.

"Once again, despite promises to keep the community informed we have behind-closed-door meetings to flog off valuable land for \$83 million in order to fund a \$45 million rehabilitation facility smaller than the current centre without the community even being informed," he said.

"The community has always supported the centre, but objects to stacking multiple high-density towers containing about 800 units in our low-density suburb without any supporting infrastructure."

'Purpose built centre'

On Monday, Royal Rehab CEO Stephen Lowndes said the land sale would allow for a purpose built, specialist rehabilitation, disability and research facility to be built.

This new facility would form the hub of a network of community and home-based support services, integrating rehabilitation and disability services into the community, he said.

"All of us at Royal Rehab are excited to be a step closer to the creation of this unique facility aimed at providing desperately needed services to support and improve the lives of people throughout NSW who have suffered serious disability or impairment as the result of an accident or illness," Mr Lowndes said.

But Locals still Protesting

According to the developer its intentions for the site are consistent with the existing approved concept plan.

According to Frasers Property Australia's CEO Dr Stanley Quek if the sale is successfully completed work would start within three months with a 2.4-hectare public park and on Royal Rehab's new Weemala facility for its long term Ryde residents.

He said the company was looking forward to delivering a high quality, affordable, residential community with abundant public parklands, while at the same time enabling an important health facility to be created.

However, Mr Clapham said CAPO feels the management of the centre "should be run out of town" for the sale.

"The payout is nearly twice the amount of money actually needed to build a new rehabilitation facility," Mr Clapham said.

"Why are they so intent on destroying our community with overdevelopment when appropriate low-density housing would have provided the necessary funds and would not be objected to by local residents?"

Organisers are expecting up to 1000 residents to attend the protest on Sunday.

Already CAPO has received more than 3000 signatures against developments on the Royal Rehabilitation Centre.