

Rehab chief attacks dithering over deed

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THE future of a proposed facility for Weemala patients at Royal Rehabilitation Centre Sydney may be jeopardised because of delays by Ryde Council in signing a deed of novation, the centre's chief executive officer Stephen Lowndes said.

He described the council's delay in approving the handover of 2.5ha of parkland from the Royal Rehab Centre's management to Fraser's Property Group's control as a "vicious setback".

"If we can't proceed quickly with the land sale, then we simply won't have the funds to build Weemala or our state-of-the-art rehabilitation and disability centre," Mr Lowndes said.

He said he was concerned that cuts to the Royal Rehab Centre's healthcare funding by the State Government and plans to relocate some of the centre's beds to another facility were exacerbating the issue and threatening the financial viability of the centre's upgrade proposals.

The centre needs to secure funding from the sale of 12ha of its Putney site to Fraser's

Property Group before it will have the funds to build the new Weemala facility.

Mr Lowndes said if the overall project fell over, NSW and the nation stood to lose the biggest and most advanced specialist rehabilitation and disability centre in the Southern Hemisphere.

Royal Rehab Centre spokesman Jim Towers said family members of patients in the Weemala facility wanted the new development, originally planned for commencement this month, to begin.

He said some Ryde councillors were using the deed of novation as an excuse to further delay the approval and construction process because of political motivations.

Liberal councillor Bill Pickering lists the Coalition Against Private Overdevelopment, the group leading the protest against the project, as one of his clients on his PR company website Hugo Halliday.

"We are concerned that not all parties are listening to our side of the story, in terms of timetable restraints and the impact further delays are having on our patients," Mr Towers said.