

# Royal Rehab funding cuts

**MELISSA DAVEY**

THE future of Royal Rehabilitation Centre in Ryde is in jeopardy after the Northern Sydney Central Coast Area Health Service cut its funding by 8 per cent, bringing the total cuts to \$12 million in the past two years.

NSW Health provides \$2.75 million a year for the Weemala extended residents care ward, but the unit costs Royal Rehab almost \$7 million a year.

Last week Bennelong Liberal candidate John Alexander pledged

\$2.5 million of federal funding toward fixing traffic problems around the hospital should the Liberals win the election.

But Royal Rehab spokesman Jim Towers said neither major political party had pledged any money towards addressing the funding cuts, with jobs and services under threat.

"When you can make a pledge for \$2.5 million to fix roads, you have to question what's on offer for fixing beds," Mr Towers said.

"I'd welcome a real commitment from the Liberal Party to assist

Royal Rehab continue in its important work in helping to relieve suffering for many residents."

Bennelong Federal Labor MP Maxine McKew avoided answering questions about the funding cuts and instead pointed to the "years of neglect" under the previous Liberal Government.

"Unlike Tony Abbott's plans to cut health spending, Labor understands the importance of investing in our hospitals and health system, including in rehabilitative care in northern Sydney," Ms McKew said.

"In addition, Federal Labor in April announced additional funding for clinical training places at Royal Rehab."

But Mr Towers described her comments as political spin.

"There is no money associated with Maxine's offers, there is nothing new on the table for us at all. As for the clinical training places, we had to apply for those through a formal tender process, they weren't just given to us.

"How good does it make Labor look to have PM Julia Gillard coming to open a frock shop [Top

Ryde City], when just down the road there are going to be serious impacts on job security and health services," Mr Towers said.

One area under threat of closure is the hospital's Driving Assessment service, one of the few remaining services in NSW which helps assess and retrain people who suffer a disability or impairment to drive.

Weemala Friends and Advocates Committee president Mick Smith said he would voice his concerns when he met Mr Alexander tomorrow.