

# Setbacks threaten Royal Rehab development

**Australia could lose the "biggest and most advanced" specialist rehabilitation and disability centres in the southern hemisphere due to a "vicious circle of setbacks", says Royal Rehabilitation CEO Stephen Lowndes.**

The 109 year old organisation believes the proposed new facility for its Weemala patients is threatened by Health Care cuts to its funding and a decision to remove 30 beds from its proposed 60-bed, \$50 million state of the art medical campus.

The new facility is also being jeopardised by Ryde Council delays in approving a deed of sale for the purchase of 12 hectares of Royal Rehabilitation's land to a developer for a NSW Government-approved residential development.

"We are in a vicious circle of setbacks not of our making that mean something has to give," commented Royal Rehabilitation Chief Executive, Stephen Lowndes.

"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. And if we keep having our Health Care funding depleted and the NSW Government follows through on taking 30 of our beds, then we have a very serious problem.

"The whole system needs more investment in rehabilitation and sub-acute care beds, not less.

"Three years ago we gave a solemn pledge to the families of Weemala patients that we would be building two 16 room purpose built units on site for

them, and that they would receive full care and support services provided from the new rehabilitation centre next door.

"If the new Rehab Centre is not viable because we only have 30 beds, or because the Government funding is simply inadequate to provide the standard of complex rehabilitation that our clients require, then what's the point of having new accommodation but not the high level of professional disability care and support they need into the future?"

Mr Lowndes said the situation was now getting "close to dire."

"My Board has spent years getting this much needed, and ground-breaking project through the approval process, only to be hit by the global financial crisis, and now by local Council interference and NSW Health obstruction.

"The whole purpose of providing the new Weemala was to honour our commitment, to the Weemala residents and their families, to maintain the close relationships that they have formed over their lifetimes in residential care, and to honour individual preferences for their future accommodation option," he said.

"Construction of the new Weemala is actually one of the conditions of the Major Project Approval insisted upon by NSW Planning. I want to know who is going to tell the families of these patients that they are going to be let down by the system?"