

Royal Rehab's new Weemala opened

NSW Health Minister Jillian Skinner on Monday opened the Weemala Extended Care Service facility - the first stage of the current redevelopment at the Royal Rehabilitation Centre.

The new facility comprises 16 higher-care units and 16 lower-care units, in a purpose built conjoint facility.

The old Weemala, at the top of Morrison Road, will be used as storage space until it is redeveloped by Frasers Putney around 2014.

Mrs Skinner said the new facility was a more spacious, home-like environment that reflects the community's enlightened view of people with a disability.

"Our focus today is about providing the best possible care for these patients," Mrs Skinner said.

"The service provides the comfort, security and independence the residents of Weemala deserve."

Weemala provides specialist and complex rehabilitation, as well as health services and support for people with a disability.

The Royal Rehabilitation Centre has a record of service to the people of NSW that spans more than 100 years.

It was founded in 1899 by blind patron Miss Susan Schardt and her great nephew Stan Riley was present at the opening.

"She used to say this work was God's commission to her and if she were here today (Monday) she'd throw up her arms and rejoice in the Lord to see such a beautiful place."

Mrs Skinner said the recent history of Weemala has been, at times, difficult for the residents and their families.

"The Royal Rehabilitation Centre and its board have worked through many changes in policy direction under the former government which contributed to a degree of uncertainty about the security of future funding arrangements.

"Now fully established, this new facility provides a far greater degree of individual privacy and independence and is designed to accom-

modate changing health care and support needs as clients' age or deteriorate.

The new Weemala will provide transitional accommodation for acquired brain injury and spinal cord injury clients from Regional NSW who have completed inpatient rehabilitation but who are awaiting to return home due to home modification or community support requirements.

Royal Rehabilitation Centre CEO Stephen Lowndes said the new Weemala not only fulfilled Susan Schardt's vision but rewarded the hard work of the centre's board which had fought for and won the best possible conditions for people with a disability.

"We can now focus on their abilities," he said.



NSW Minister for Health Jillian Skinner (fourth from left) with Ryde MP Victor Dominello on her left and official guests Royal Rehabilitation Centre CEO Stephen Lowndes, Ryde City Cllr Vic Tigg, Residents and Advocates Chairman Mick Matthews, RRC Chairman Clive Austin, RRC Vice Chairman Anthony Staveley, Ryde City Council General Manager John Neish, Stan Riley, descendants of RRC founder Susan Schardt and Weemala residents at Monday's official opening of the Weemala unit. TWT on-the-spot PHOTO.