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NEW GOSFORD STROKE UNIT A LIFESAVER SAYS MINISTER

NSW Minister for Health, Craig Knowles, today visited the new Stroke Unit at Gosford Hospital and said the establishment of it and 17 other similar units across the State was a key achievement of the health portfolio to date.

“Stroke is the cause of death for over 10 per cent of the NSW population and around a third of all those who survive a stroke will live with a permanent disability,” said Mr Knowles. “In the Central Coast Area Health Service alone, around 1,400 people currently die from stroke every year.

“However, we have learnt that getting a person who has suffered a stroke into a dedicated unit which provides a comprehensive range of specialist services – both treatment and rehabilitation – can improve both the survival rate, and minimise the impact of disability.”

Mr Knowles said the Gosford Stroke Unit was announced last year as part of a \$12.8 million state-wide program under the Greater Metropolitan Transition Taskforce which worked with doctors, nurses and allied health workers in the field of stroke care to develop a blueprint for the 18 units.

The Gosford Stroke Unit is an eight-bed acute unit located within one of the medical wards. To provide specialist care, additional staff in areas such as neurology, nursing, social work, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy are being appointed to cater for the specific needs of stroke patients.

“In a community such as the Central Coast, where there is a large population of older people, the presence of a dedicated stroke unit makes enormous sense,” said Mr Knowles.

“Certainly your local member, Marie Andrews, has been a great advocate of this development on behalf of the local community. She believes, as I do, that with the \$208 million Health Access Plan well underway the Central Coast is on the cusp of having health care facilities unparalleled in the country.”

Under the GMTT plan, Gosford Hospital was allocated \$108,000 to establish the unit and will receive \$1.3million every year to operate the service.

“This type of service can be a real life saver. We now know that early access to intensive stroke treatment can decrease the likelihood of ongoing complications or even death by 40 per cent.

“In fact, even though the hospitalisation rate for stroke rose in the period from 1989 to 2000, the death rate has continued to fall. This is a direct result of the reduction in risk factors (such as smoking), advances in medical treatment and tremendous improvements in our knowledge of how we treat stroke.

“The establishment of these units is a direct result of this Government’s commitment to working closely with the people who work at the ‘coal face’, delivering care in their local communities.

“I’m very impressed with how quickly and effectively the unit has been established at Gosford.

“This is a real improvement to the range of services available on the Central Coast and one which will offer better stroke care than ever before to the local community.”

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