



**18 November 2008**

## **Opposition's Private Members Bill a risk to the well-being of child patients**

Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, said today his preliminary advice on the Opposition's proposed Private Members Bill about the management of paediatric services was that it could pose a risk to the welfare of injured or sick children in public hospitals.

Mr Della Bosca said he would consider the Private Members Bill carefully, however he would be guided by clinicians and the outcome of the Garling Report.

"My early advice from clinicians is that the Bill's proposal that paediatricians should oversee the treatment of all children in general or adult wards could deny them the specialist care they need," the Minister said.

"For example, if a child is admitted to a hospital with a brain injury, the most appropriate specialist to care for their needs and treatment is a neuro-surgeon – not a paediatrician.

"And if a child has a mental illness, they need to be cared for by a child and adolescent psychiatrist – not a paediatrician.

"I have also been advised by our clinicians that to put arbitrary time restrictions on the diagnosis and treatment plans of sick or injured children could pressure doctors into making the wrong decisions," he said.

"Every patient admitted to our hospitals is provided with a treatment plan – but in some cases it is not immediately obvious what the patient is suffering from and what longer term treatment they require.

"To come up with the correct diagnosis and treatment can require an extensive investigation and a lengthy observation which can take longer than 24 hours.

"The Bill's 24-hour deadline is purely arbitrary and not based on any evidence or clinical experience or expertise – the Opposition has simply plucked it out of the air," the Minister said.

"It is not the job of politicians to place unnecessary pressure and deadlines on doctors and nurses through legislation.

"Senior Counsel Peter Garling was appointed by the Governor to carry out a Special Commission of Inquiry into the NSW health system.

"I will use the recommendations in the Garling report to develop a plan to improve our hospitals," Mr Della Bosca said.

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“This will provide NSW families with a sustainable, evidence-based and practical plan to improve health services across the State,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“We have an excellent health system in NSW and we benefit from highly skilled doctors and nurses.

“The best way to continue to improve the system is to accept that when mistakes have been made they need to be honestly admitted, and sensible improvements put in place based on best clinical practice,” he added.

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