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## **Options to be investigated to improve State-owned nursing home care**

NSW Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, said today that expressions of interest will soon be called to explore service models that may lead to the transfer of 11 NSW Government-owned nursing homes to the non-government sector.

“The proposed models will offer new opportunities to provide improved care for aged care residents and may include the redevelopment of some facilities, providing better quality homes,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“If they do not deliver better models of care and accommodation, then we will not proceed,” he said.

Any transfer process will ensure:

- Local access to existing residential aged care places.
- Continuity of aged care services
- Minimal disruption of services to residents.
- Maintenance of services to residents with special care requirements
- Protection of heritage assets where applicable.

“If the proposals are to proceed it will be a priority to ensure minimum disruption to residents and ensure families are fully briefed and comfortable with any changes,” the Minister said.

“This is a very vulnerable group in the community so it is important we investigate options to improve their care.

“We have an ageing population and rising demand for health services.

“We have to ensure we can deliver more services every year to a larger number of families across the State,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“Every service we deliver must be safe and efficient so we can continue to meet the community’s expectations and the rising demand for health care services.

“Since 1996, NSW Health had implemented the Residential Aged Care Reform Program to transfer State Government residential aged care facilities to the non-government sector.

“This followed the passage of the Aged Care Act where the Commonwealth, through the Department of Health and Ageing, has funding, policy and regulatory responsibility for residential aged care services throughout Australia,” the Minister said.

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“In every other State and Territory across Australia, thousands of nursing homes are funded and managed by the non-Government sector and regulated by the Commonwealth.

“In NSW, more than 98 per cent of nursing homes are already managed and operated by the non-government sector and we are looking at completing the Residential Aged Care Reform Program this financial year,” the Minister said.

“NSW has a record health budget of almost \$14 billion and it is essential this funding is directed towards further improving front line health services for families across the State – that is our core responsibility,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“To ensure nursing home residents and their families understand the transfer process, what it means for them and to address any concerns, NSW Health will be holding information sessions in local communities,” the Minister said.

“The dates and times for these sessions are now being finalised and will be announced at the earliest possible opportunity.

“Importantly, as part of this process, entitlements of staff transferring to the non government or private sector will be protected under the State Government Nursing Home Framework Agreement.

“Staff will be offered a range of options including a transfer to employment with the potential new operators of the aged care facilities or redeployment within NSW Health where appropriate.

“Staff will be consulted about the proposed transfer and as well as talking to people we will be making information available through the NSW Health website at [www.health.nsw.gov.au/initiatives/nursinghomes/index.asp](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/initiatives/nursinghomes/index.asp).

“With an ageing population, these services will continue to be in strong demand and that is why we are consulting to ensure we get the best results for patients,” Mr Della Bosca said.

Facilities included in the proposed transfer include:

- Corowa District Nursing Home
- Garrawarra Centre
- Governor Phillip Nursing Home
- Hillcrest Nursing Home
- Kimbarra Lodge Hostel
- Holbrook Hospital Nursing Home
- Leeton Hospital Aged Care Unit
- Murrumburrah-Harden District Nursing Home
- Muswellbrook Aged Care Facility
- Queen Victoria Memorial Home
- Wallsend Aged Care Facility